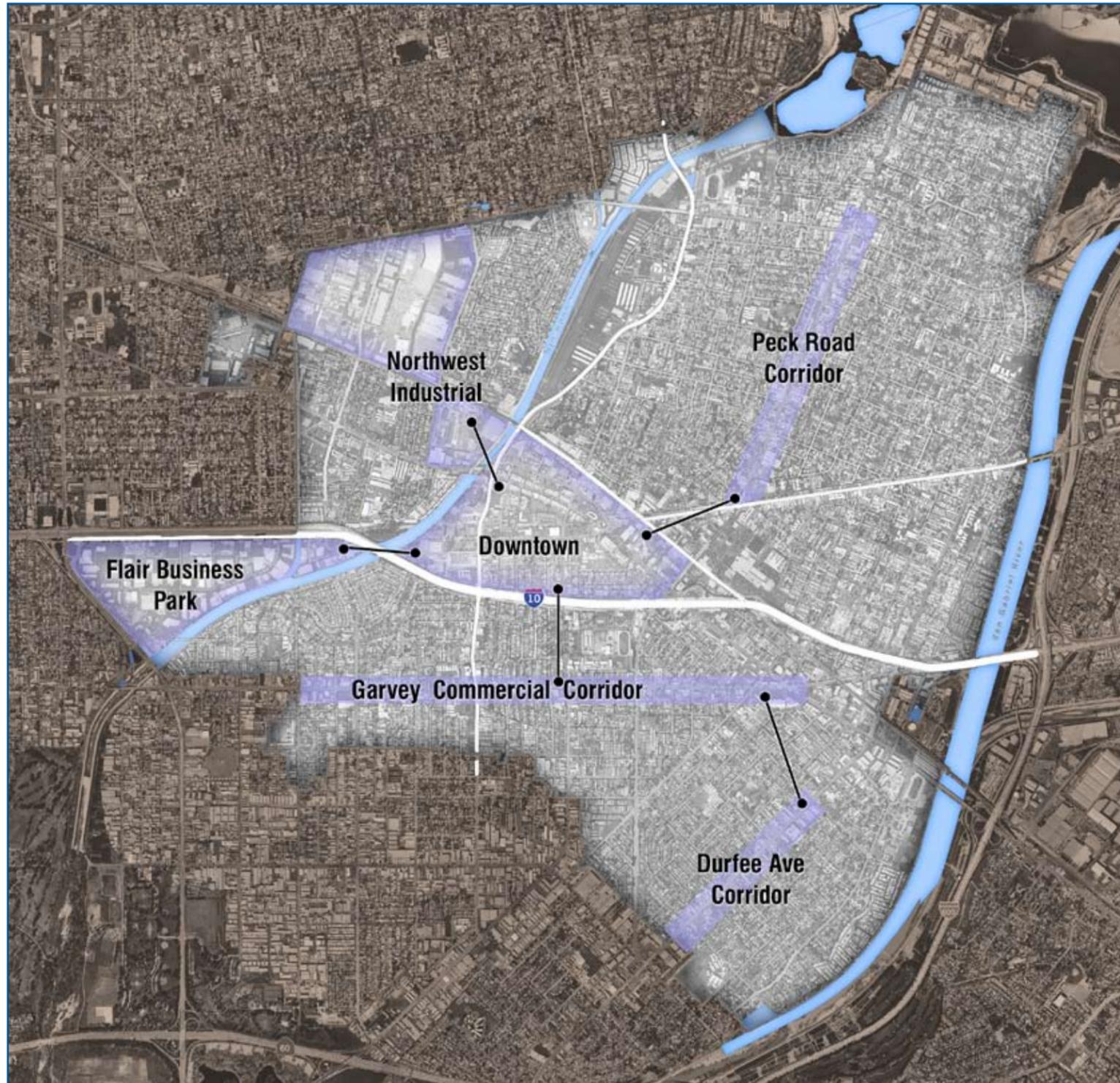


## FINDING CONNECTIONS IN EL MONTE

A Recommendations Report of Land Use, Economic, and Circulation Strategies for Key Districts in El Monte, California





### Compass Blueprint Program

This project was funded by the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project Program. Compass Blueprint assists Southern California cities and other organizations in evaluating planning options and stimulating development consistent with the region's goals. Compass Blueprint tools support visioning efforts, infill analyses, economic and policy analyses, and marketing and communication programs.

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### Acknowledgements

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- James W. Mussenden, City Manager  
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- Dante Hall, Assistant City Manager  
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- Minh Thai, Planning Manager  
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- Alex Chan, Associate Planner  
City of El Monte

This report is the product of their efforts and interests to create a better future for the City of El Monte.

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The El Monte Station is a key part of the San Bernardino Metrolink line, which is the busiest of Southern California's seven Metrolink lines, running from Downtown Los Angeles eastward through the San Gabriel Valley and into the Inland Empire, terminating in San Bernardino.

June 2008

Prepared by:



In collaboration with:





## Introduction

El Monte is located in the heart of San Gabriel Valley and is known for containing one of the busiest multi-modal transit hubs, which is served by the MTA, Foothill Transit, El Monte Transit, as well as Metrolink. In the past three years, there has been intensive interest in downtown El Monte, including residential, commercial, and industrial development around a proposed \$500 million transit center. City staff anticipates that this project will help revitalize El Monte.

Surrounding the transit center and greater downtown El Monte are several key districts slated for potential revitalization, intensification, and development. These districts, which are also included as part of the City's redevelopment project areas, are as follows:

### Northwest Industrial

This area is the industrial heart of El Monte and presently suffers from groundwater pollution, aging infrastructure, irregular parcels, and obsolete buildings with significant vacancies. Building on its locational advantages and proximity to markets, this area could develop into the industrial engine for the subregion.

### Flair Business Park

This 5 million square foot office park along the I-10 is highly underutilized, containing a range of 1- to 7-story buildings, but also serving as headquarters for many firms. This area could be positioned to attract not only corporate headquarters, but also business connections with the Pacific Rim.

### Downtown

The greater downtown has a mix of uses, including a traditional main street outdoor mall, transit center, governmental headquarters, and surrounding residential uses. The area is intended to intensify into a mixed-use, mixed

income, and transit oriented area that will attract businesses and provide significant high-density housing.

### Corridors

Several major corridors feed these areas, including Garvey Commercial Corridor, Valley Boulevard, Peck Road, and Durfee. These corridors are dotted with strip commercial that is underutilized and underperforming. The City envisions intensifying these corridors with high-density residential and concentrating commercial uses. All four districts fall within 2% Opportunity Areas.

Intensification strategies contained in this recommendations report and the General Plan update will allow the City to increase by approximately 4,500 units at buildout. The Downtown, Northwest Industrial, and Flair Business Park could grow from under 15,000 employees to over 54,000 at buildout.

### Compass Blueprint Strategy

In 2001, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) started a visioning process that culminated in a regional strategy to accommodate the coming growth while providing for livability, mobility, prosperity, and sustainability. This strategy, called "Compass Blueprint" promotes a stronger link between region wide transportation and land use planning and encourages creative, forward-thinking, and sustainable development solutions that fit local needs and support shared regional values. The strategy is broadly based on the following four key "Compass Principles."

**Principle 1: Improve Mobility**

**Principle 2: Foster Livability in All Communities**

**Principle 3: Enable Prosperity for All People**

**Principle 4: Promote Sustainability for Future Generations**

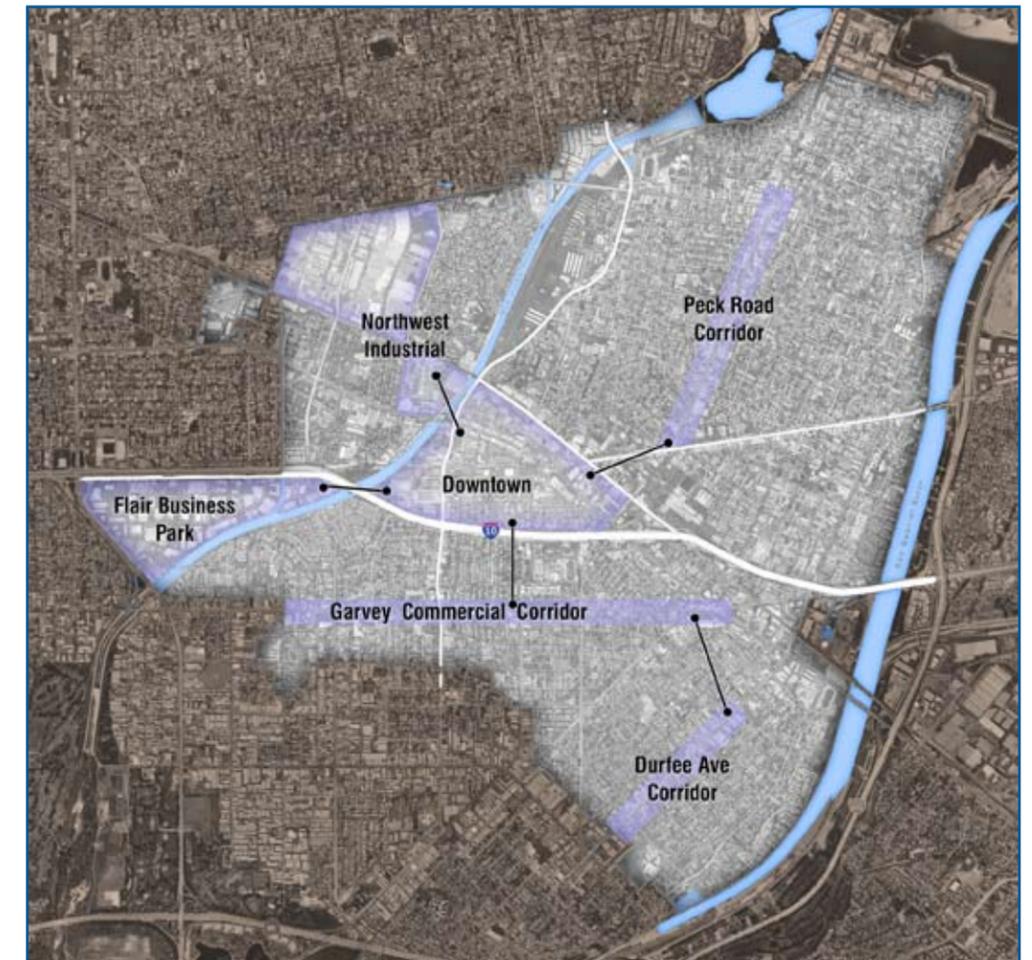
Beginning in 2005, SCAG initiated the implementation phase of Compass Blueprint and began partnering with jurisdictions in Southern California to realize this growth vision on the ground. To date, over 40 demonstration projects have been conducted that exemplify the goals shared by the Compass Blueprint and unique visions of local communities.

### Project Goals

The overarching goal of this effort is to create synergistic land use, design, economic, and mobility strategies that will foster compact development patterns, increase the supply of housing, and promote and incentivize economic revitalization and employment. To that end, the following specific objectives are envisioned for this effort:

- 1. Land Use Strategy.** Develop a realistic land use strategy to focus and intensify residential uses within the downtown and along major corridors, which may include strategies to redesignate land for residential uses, upzone land, or even create higher density land use classifications.
- 2. Economic Development and Job Creation.** Propose specific economic development policies and practical strategies that will capture the most appropriate business sectors of the San Gabriel Valley most suitable for location in El Monte.
- 3. Circulation Strategies.** Propose realistic circulation strategies to tie the subdistricts to each other, to the proposed Transit Village, and to the larger subregion through a multi-modal effort focusing on transit, freeway access, major arterials, and a multi-use trail system.
- 4. General Plan Update.** Provide key input for the Land Use, Community Design, and Circulation Elements as part of the City's General Plan update.

## Project Location and Districts





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## Northwest Industrial District

### Introduction

The Northwest Industrial District (NID) is a 400-acre area located in the northwest corner of El Monte. This area is separated from other areas of the City by the railroads and the Rio Hondo River Channel. The NID contains a wide mix of uses, including manufacturing, residential, limited office, and retail/commercial uses. The business areas are covered by a redevelopment project area and the surrounding neighborhoods are a focus of neighborhood improvement efforts.

Historically, the NID has served as a key manufacturing district and home to major defense industries, logistics firms, and heavy manufacturing. These included businesses such as Clayton Industries, St. Gobains, NavCom, and others. With the transformation of manufacturing in the Los Angeles basin, the above industries and others have moved out of the region.

Yet the NID has tremendous potential to become a first class modern industrial park. Its vast land resources, strategic location near population centers, and access to railroads and Interstate 10 (I-10) offer strategic cost advantages to businesses. Infrastructure improvements can improve freeway access, leverage potential uses of the railroad, and improve internal circulation. Brownfield cleanup efforts offer the opportunity to improve the health of adjacent neighborhoods.

### General Plan Context

The El Monte General Plan update envisions an expanded role for the NID and has therefore established the following vision for the area:

*The Northwest District is the industrial engine for the city, attracting a balance of sustainable manufacturing, distribution, and technology-oriented business. It provides opportunity for investment, entrepreneurship, and*

*significant creation of well-paid jobs in a well-managed environment that promotes a clean environment, ensures long-term vitality, and strengthens neighborhoods.*

### Issue #1: Infrastructure and Transportation

With the aging of its infrastructure and development of newer industrial areas outside of El Monte, the NID is underutilized. The City has not had sufficient capital improvement plans in place to maintain this area. Thus, for the NID to achieve its long-term vision and potential, investments in transportation, water, sewer, and storm drainage systems are required.

The NID has transportation challenges that must be addressed. The first issue is freeway access. Arden Road is adjacent to the Arden Village Neighborhood and insufficient in size to carry significant truck traffic. The direct route to the I-10—Baldwin Avenue—is also undersized and incapable of carrying significant traffic. The conditions and design carrying capacity of these roadways will soon be exceeded.

Freeway access is also complicated by the fact that both Flair Park and the NID rely on the I-10 and Baldwin interchange to access the east bound freeway. Moreover, traffic moving west on I-10 takes the same exit and move through residential areas to again access Baldwin Avenue. With significant employment projected for these two areas, solving access to the west bound I-10 and providing egress for west bound traffic is a priority for both the NID and Flair Park.

Train traffic on the Southern Pacific Railroad is also of critical concern. With the completion of the Alameda Corridor East project, railroad traffic is anticipated to increase 166 percent over the foreseeable future. Currently, the tracks run at-grade across Baldwin Avenue and Arden Road, causing significant traffic delays and potential safety concerns for residents. Although the Alameda Corridor East Authority will install a



Conceptual visualization of grade separation at Baldwin Ave

grade separation at Baldwin Avenue, Arden Road will remain at grade.

The internal roadway circulation system within the NID is in poor condition. Many of the roads have not been improved in years and require reconstruction. This problem is complicated by the fact that the City does not have either a capital improvement plan for this area nor the fee structure in place to raise revenue needed to reconstruct the existing roadways. This presents a tremendous unfunded liability to the City.

Finally, the NID does not have adequate infrastructure plans in place for its water, sewer, and drainage infrastructure. The City recently passed an impact fee to help defray the costs of infrastructure improvements citywide, but additional fees will likely need to be generated within the NID. The improvements could be funded through developer agreements.

### Strategy #1: Improve Internal and External Circulation within the NID

The City should improve Baldwin Avenue, Lower Azusa Road, and Arden Road to carry traffic volumes consistent with their intended function. Truck traffic should not be allowed to continue

on essentially residential streets due to potential health and safety hazards. The internal street network within the NID industrial areas should also be reconfigured to improve the flow of traffic.

### Strategy #2: Improve Access to the I-10

In concert with CalTrans, the City should examine ways to improve access onto the west I-10 through the relocation of the onramp, reconstruction of the three-level interchange, or road widening. The City should also improve the access onto the eastbound I-10, since the present configuration creates a Level of Service F for Flair Park. Working through regional, state, and federal channels will be required to

address this complex and costly infrastructure improvement.

### Strategy #3: Work with the Alameda Corridor East Authority for Rail Improvements.

The City should work with the Alameda Corridor East Authority to secure funding to expedite the grade separation at Baldwin Avenue and additional at-grade mobility improvements at Arden Road to allow for efficient and safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians. The City should also lobby for appropriate sound walls and vegetation to provide a buffer from the noise and air quality impacts of the rail.

### Infrastructure and Design Constraints and Improvement Areas





**Strategy #4: Update Sewer, Drainage, and Storm Water Master Plans.**

In compliance with new state laws and increasing regulatory focus on NPDES requirements, the City should update its master plans for water, sewer, and storm drainage. In drafting these plans, the City should pay particular attention to the NID, as the infrastructure systems in this area are in greatest need of repair and rehabilitation.

**Strategy #5: Develop Capital Improvement Plans and Appropriate Fee Structures.**

The City should institute a developer impact fee to charge new businesses seeking to relocate into the NID or expanding operations. Additionally, the City should establish a benefit assessment district to raise revenues to support the reconstruction and reconfiguration of roadways in the NID. The assessment should be based on the impact caused by a business, and based on the type and frequency of truck trips. Additional mitigation fees should be developed for other similar impacts.

**Issue #2: Economic Development and Land Uses**

The future of the NID is as an industrial engine for El Monte, promoting growth of existing firms and attracting new manufacturing firms in a well-managed, quality working environment, and a modern industrial park compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The NID’s economic vision is focused on creating new jobs through business expansion and attraction. Although the City welcomes the opportunity to assist existing wholesale, warehousing, and distribution uses to expand and create new jobs, the Northwest District should be designed to attract light manufacturing uses because they are more compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods and produce

twice as many jobs as warehousing and distribution.

Manufacturing jobs traditionally provided a route to a middle-class lifestyle. In recent decades, automation, increased productivity, and global competition have reduced these jobs. Meanwhile, low industrial vacancy rates, increasing land values, and conversion to non-industrial uses have driven manufacturers out of the San Gabriel Valley. Nonetheless, El Monte’s central location, transportation network, and access to a large labor force make the City a good location for firms.

**Strategy #6: Create a Business Attraction and Expansion Program**

The City should support and encourage the expansion of existing conforming businesses and the attraction of new manufacturing businesses to the Northwest Industrial Area.

**Strategy #7: Business Visitation**

The City should implement a business visitation program to identify strengths and weaknesses of the NID, based on input from business in the area, and develop strategies to improve the NID as a business location.

**Strategy #8: Provide Economic Development Assistance**

The City should investigate the feasibility of establishing a state or federal enterprise zone to provide a variety of tax credits and other incentives to businesses that invest in designated zones or hire residents from these zones.

**Strategy #9: Market the Northwest Industrial District**

The City should work with its economic development partners—especially the San Gabriel Valley Economic Partnership and the Los Angeles County Economic Development

Corporation—to market the area to potential new businesses. The City should develop ties to industrial real estate brokers to help market the area.

**Strategy #10: Create Incentives Package**

The City should create an incentives policy and provide incentives to attract businesses to El Monte if and only if:

1. The type of business has been previously identified in the business-attraction-target strategy.
2. The business contractually agrees to maintain a minimum investment and a minimum employment level for a term of years as identified in the incentives policy.
3. The City also offers the incentive to existing businesses in El Monte.

**CREATING A BUSINESS-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT**

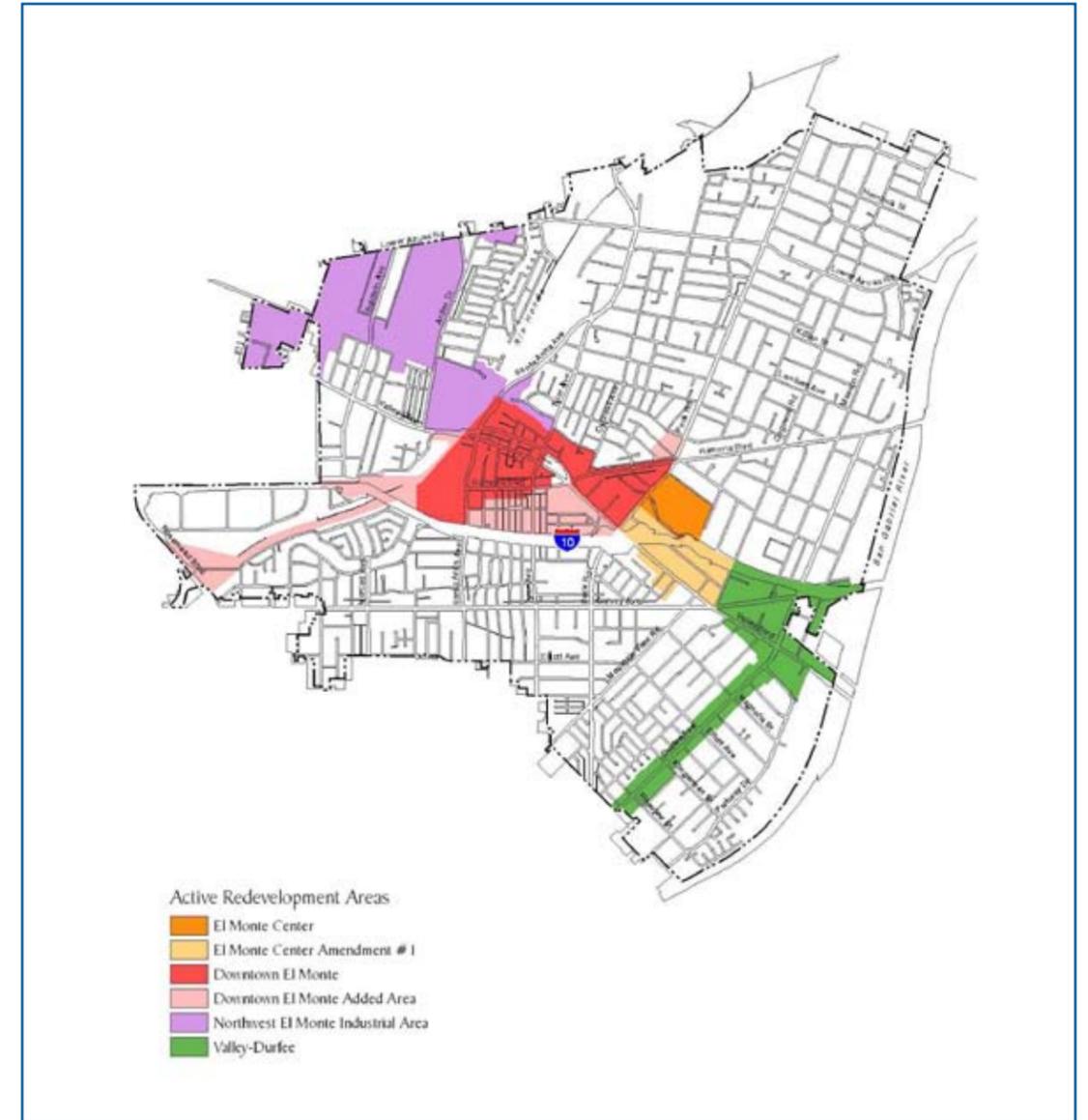
The City will need to implement various infrastructure and environmental improvements to maximize the business reasons for choosing this El Monte location. The City and General Plan should establish the following strategies to achieve the economic, environmental, and other planning objectives of the District.

**Strategy #11: Plan and Provide Sufficient Infrastructure and Municipal Services to Serve the Full Buildout of the NID**

The City should ensure that the following infrastructure improvements are made:

- **Transportation.** Improve transportation through freeway egress and access at Baldwin Avenue, completing the Baldwin Avenue grade crossing, and improving internal circulation within the District.

**City Redevelopment Project Areas**



- **Emerald Necklace.** Green the San Gabriel River through Emerald Necklace projects, including linear parks, bicycle trails, and walking paths, and green infrastructure.
- **Superfund Site/Brownfields.** Clean up the Superfund site and address brownfield sites to reduce the liability for future investors and stimulate private investments in the district.
- **Infrastructure.** Create master plans and integrated environmental documentation for sewer, water, drainage, transportation, and other improvements.



**Strategy #12: Establish Business Improvement District**

The City should create a property-based business improvement district to help fund the physical, environmental, and design improvements to transform the NID into a modern business industrial park.

**LAND USE DIRECTION**

To transition the NID, significant land policy change is also necessary. The City Council created the Northwest El Monte Redevelopment Project Area in 1993 to facilitate this change, resulting in the development of new industrial businesses. The Redevelopment Authority could provide financial assistance or regulatory concessions, or exercise property acquisition powers to encourage greater change.

The City's Development Code has not been updated in many years to reflect the type of businesses that contribute to the long term vision of the district. Moreover, the appropriate permitting processes is not in place to facilitate desired uses in the NID.

**Strategy #13: Update Permitted Land Uses in the Development Code**

The City of El Monte should review all the types of businesses and permitted land uses within the NID to ensure they are consistent with the City's vision and do not cause significant incompatibilities with adjacent uses.

Heavy industrial land uses that are incompatible with residential neighborhoods should be phased out and replaced by cleaner industries. Moreover, the City should also review and adjust the mix of allowable uses to encourage support businesses to locate in the NID.

**Strategy #14: Utilize RDA Incentives to Facilitate Reinvestment in the NID**

To encourage the revitalization of the NID, the City should offer redevelopment incentives such as financial assistance, acquisition of properties where needed, regulatory concessions, and lot consolidation incentives to facilitate assembly and efficient reuse of land.

**Issue #3: Environmental Contamination**

As an older industrial area in El Monte, the NID faces a number of significant environmental challenges. Transforming and revitalizing this area will require attention to cleaning up the physical environment.

**CONTAMINATION**

The groundwater is contaminated with synthetic organic compounds and other contaminants from past industrial and commercial activities. The EPA has designated portions of the entire Northwest Industrial District as part of the El Monte Operable Unit of a Superfund site.

Progress on cleanup has been slowed due to significant lawsuits among the responsible parties, particularly since many of the parties are no longer in business or the pollution has long migrated to the water table. The San Gabriel Water Quality Authority was created to lobby for and speed up the full cleanup of the Superfund site. The Authority has just released several remediation plans for these areas.

In addition to these concerns, there is significant ground level contamination of many industrial sites. Clayton Industries, Saint Gobains, and other industrial sites require cleanup before the sites can be reused. In some cases, the cleanup activity required is minimal and normal for industrial sites, while in other cases, the cleanup activities are substantial and costly.

**Strategy #15: Expedite Cleanup of the Superfund Site in the NID**



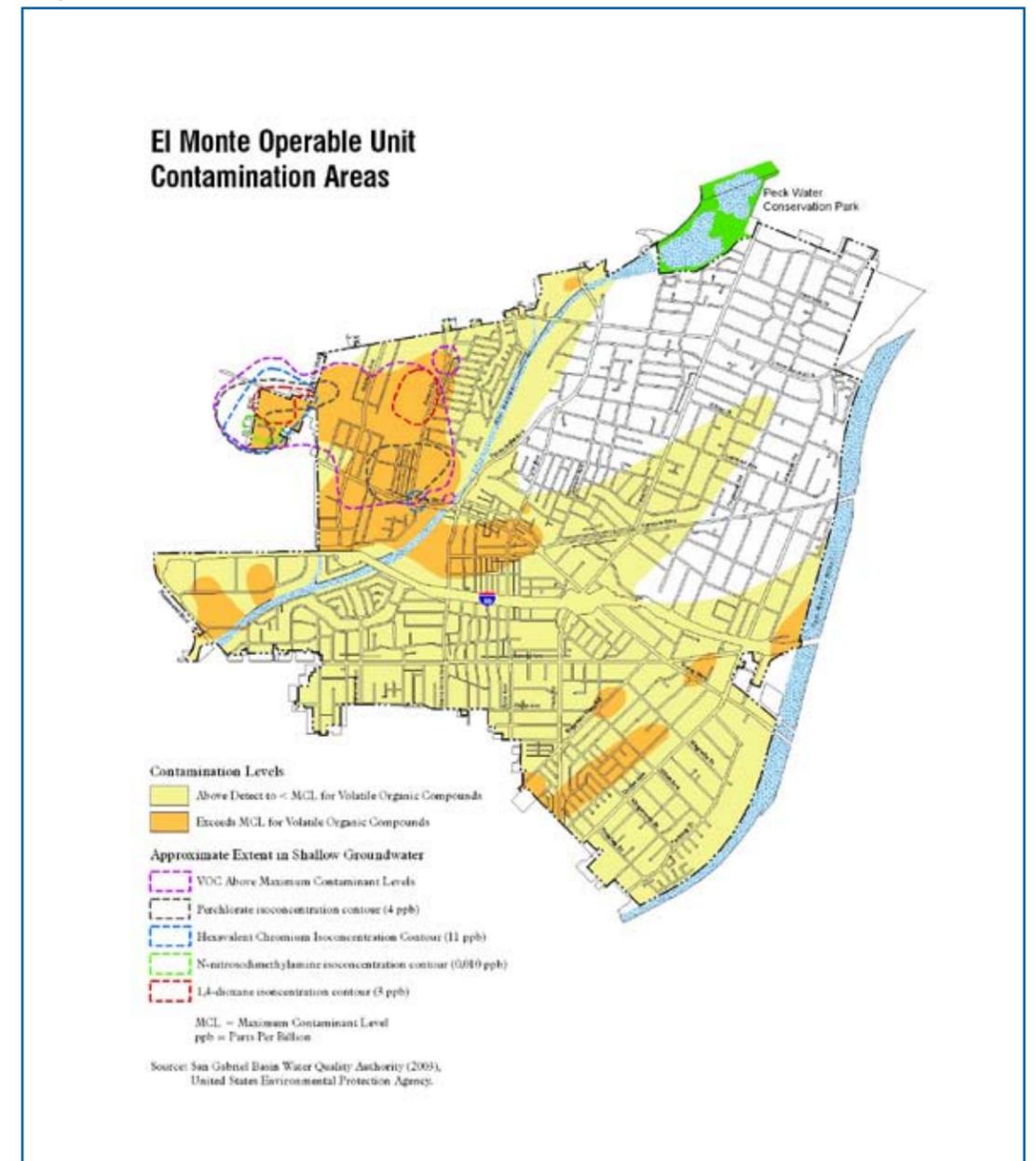
Industrial sites, like Clayton Industries, present opportunities for significant redevelopment in the NID.

The City should cooperate with the San Gabriel Water Quality Authority to expedite cleanup and remediation of groundwater pollution in the El Monte Operable Unit. The City should work aggressively through the San Gabriel Water Basin Authority to expedite cleanup. The presence of ongoing litigation creates a negative image and potential constraint to the transformation of Flair Park.

**Strategy #16: Brownfield Cleanup Policies**

The City should require property owners to fully cooperate with local, state, and federal agencies and to fund the full cleanup of former heavy industrial properties prior to selling or transferring the property. The City should maintain a policy of requiring cleanup, not paving over of contaminated areas. The presence of or perceived concerns over potential brownfields is a significant deterrent to the recycling and full utilization of the NID.

Map of Contamination Areas in El Monte (2003)



**Strategy #17: Apply for State and Federal Funding to Assist in Cleanup of Sites**

Many sites that likely contain contamination will take many years to remediate soil conditions. The cost of this cleanup is unknown, but it presents a significant deterrent to attracting the

type of businesses desired. The City should explore state and federal grants and loans that can be leveraged with other funds to assist in the immediate cleanup of sites in the NID.



**AIR AND NOISE POLLUTION**

The NID generates significant levels of noise associated with normal industrial operations and truck traffic. Although not uncommon for any industrial area, of greater concern is the particulate matter and pollutants generated by manufacturing, industrial processes, and idling diesel-powered trucks and refrigeration units. Many of the industries in the NID are significant sources of air pollutants in the San Gabriel Valley.

**Strategy #18: Setup and Enforce Specific Air Quality and Noise Standards**

Neighborhoods surrounding the business areas have frequently complained about high levels of noise and air pollution, but the Municipal Code does not contain appropriate regulations that allow the City to set forth, monitor, and enforce health standards. The City should revise its Municipal Code to establish minimum performance standards for noise and air pollution.

**HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

Although air emissions are a concern for nearby residential neighborhoods, the NID also has a significant number of businesses using hazardous wastes or producing air emissions. These facilities include: chrome platers, steel foundries, manufacturing operations, and other businesses that produce, use, or transport hazardous waste materials or produce air pollutants.

Many of these agencies are required to report to state and federal environmental agencies, like the South Coast Air Quality Management District and the California Environment Protection Agency. Although regulation of these facilities is conducted by other governmental entities and beyond the control of the City of El Monte, the City has a vested interest in monitoring these agencies for compliance with state and federal laws and the remediation of land within El Monte.

**Strategy #19: Create Periodic Business Inspection Program**

As part of the business license program, the City could investigate the development and implementation of a business program that requires periodic inspection and certification of properties so that they meet current standards for pollution generation and control, wastewater drainage and disposal, and other health and safety requirements. This type of program will help control the externalities caused by industrial activities, and maintain public support for the NID.

As part of an inspection program, the City should periodically review regulated industries for compliance with conditional use permit conditions, performance standards, and other operating standards to ensure that regulated businesses are fully meeting City codes.

**Issue #4: Design**

Businesses that promote the long-term vision for the NID will seek a high profile location that offers the amenities of a modern industrial park. However, significant design challenges in NID must be addressed to revitalize this area.

**ARCHITECTURAL GUIDELINES**

The City's General Plan and Development Code currently treat the Northwest Industrial District as a manufacturing and industrial area. Large floor area ratios are allowed in the municipal code to stimulate development, but there are no design standards or guidelines to ensure excellence in site planning, architecture, or performance. Many of the older businesses were permitted many years ago and may be in nonconforming status. Current buildings are outmoded for modern industrial operations.

**Strategy #20: Create Modern Design Guidelines for Industrial Buildings**

To support a modern industrial park environment, the City should create design guidelines, performance standards, and other site planning guidance to ensure that industrial businesses are built and operated in a manner that strengthens surrounding residential neighborhoods.

**STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS**

Beyond the provision of an efficient transportation system, a key component of an attractive district is the condition of the streetscape, pedestrian access, and other amenities. However, since residential areas are intertwined and weave throughout the District and residents must walk through these areas to access services, streetscape improvements are a necessary amenity.

**Strategy #21: Improve Streetscapes**

The City should include provisions to improve the streetscape with pedestrian paths, street trees, and wayfaring signage to create a unique district identity and encourage pedestrian movement, particularly for the many daytime and night-time employees working in the NID. The streetscape plan should also be designed to create a pleasant driving experience through the district.

**PARKS AND OPEN SPACE**

The NID is surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Arden Village is the most established residential area and is denoted by its location along the river, traditional single-family homes, and classic 1950s architecture. Other neighborhoods to the south, such as the Gibson-Mariposa Neighborhood, are well-established but have evidence of deteriorated housing conditions.

The business area within the NID is nearly completely devoid of open space, parks, trees,



Conceptual illustration of attractive modern industrial building.

and other environmental amenities. The General Plan sets forth a goal for 3 acres per 1,000 residents, yet this area has only a tenth of the required parkland. The General Plan does not have a parkland requirement for nonresidential areas. Moreover, the area is nearly devoid of a canopy of trees to provide shade, potentially reduce energy consumption, and mitigate pollution.

The only significant open space amenity is the Rio Hondo River, an improved concrete flood control channel. The Emerald Necklace Vision and Plan proposes significant landscape amenities along the river. The inclusion of landscape amenities would not only help beautify the district but also help clean the air for surrounding residential areas impacted by pollutants from heavy industrial uses.

**Strategy #22: Create Urban Forestry Plan**

The high level of air pollutants creates health concerns for employees and residents in the area. The City could, as part of creating an Urban Forestry Plan, plant trees that are known to filter the largest quantity of pollutants. This measure would help, in some way, to contribute positively to air quality improvements. The urban forest

should be planted along streets, railroad right-of-ways, and industries.

**Strategy #23: Create a Neighborhood Park to Anchor the NID**

The City should examine the feasibility of creating joint school and park sites to create large parks that would serve the NID. This would provide residents and the business community the opportunity to benefit from park and recreational activities.

**Strategy #24: Implement Emerald Necklace Improvements**

The City should expedite the completion of Emerald Necklace improvements to the San Gabriel River channel. Impact fees could also be developed to provide a funding or bonding source for these improvements. In accordance with the Emerald Necklace Vision and Plan, proposed improvements should include bicycle and pedestrian trails, planting of a corridor of trees, water features and native plants, and interpretative signage.

**Strategy #25: Beautify Freeway Access**

The City should coordinate with CalTrans to beautify on-ramps and off-ramps to the I-10 with coordinated landscaping, carefully placed trees, rock features, and other landscape amenities that are attractive, functional, drought tolerant, and easy to maintain.



## Flair Business Park

### Introduction

Flair Business Park is a 200-acre business park flanking the southern edge of the I-10. Flair Park serves as an employment center in El Monte and is occupied by a range of office, industrial, and manufacturing businesses. With its freeway frontage, Flair Park is visible along the I-10 and is strategically located between Downtown Los Angeles and Ontario.

Flair Park has a storied past. As the original site of a World War II airfield along the

freeway, Flair Park was named after the cable address of Fletcher Aviation. Flair Park was originally intended for a mixture of industry, manufacturing, and commerce uses. The 1940s and 1950s saw a significant boom in defense-related business and a burgeoning aerospace industry centered around El Monte. For more than 50 years, parts for space shuttles and rockets were designed or built in El Monte.

Flair Park has evolved into the City's office district, with the highest concentration of government, finance, and business services. Major employers at Flair Park now include Cathay Bank, East West National Bank, Wells Fargo, and Los Angeles County. With a lack of

prime office space with visibility and freeway access in the San Gabriel Valley, Flair Park has begun to attract major corporations, particularly international finance and trade.

### General Plan Context

El Monte envisions a new role for Flair Business Park as a critical participant in the local and regional economy. With its unparalleled view of the San Gabriel Mountains, significant land holdings, strategic position along I-10, and location near El Monte Airport, the El Monte General Plan sets forth the following vision for Flair Park:

.....the professional and financial district for El Monte and the San Gabriel Valley. It attracts a variety of businesses that include finance, international trade, government, and local-regional niche markets. Its working environment provides the quality amenities demanded of a premium mid-rise office park with easy and convenient access to regional markets that benefit from unparalleled transit, freeway, and rail access.

### Issue #1: Transportation

Surrounded by the I-10 to the north, the flood control channels to the south, and Rosemead Boulevard to the east, Flair Park has limited access to other areas of El Monte. For Flair Park to achieve its overall vision, its transportation infrastructure must be improved to address a number of access and connection issues.

### FREEWAY CONNECTION AT BALDWIN AVENUE

The eastbound I-10 has a freeway ramp that allows for direct access into Flair Park. However, autos moving westbound must exit on the north side of the freeway, make an eastward loop and then travel south on Baldwin Avenue to Flair Park. Baldwin Avenue is also the main route extending from the Northwest Industrial District to the I-10 and is projected to have a considerable increase in truck traffic.

Addressing this issue presents significant logistical, engineering, and funding challenges. The Baldwin interchange is a three-level interchange, with Baldwin Avenue at grade, an overhead bridge supporting an eight-lane portion of the I-10, and an elevated busway that parallels with and merges with the I-10. Reconfiguration costs would be significant.

### Strategy #1: Completely Reconstruct the I-10 and Baldwin Interchange

Permanent solutions to the congestion on the eastern edge of Flair Park may require complete



The Baldwin Avenue/I-10 Interchange

reconfiguration of the three-level interchange, a costly project of importance to El Monte and the San Gabriel Valley. Should reconfiguration occur, the City should explore options for providing direct bus service to Flair Park.

### EGRESS AND INGRESS TO FLAIR PARK

Significant peak hour congestion occurs along Rosemead at Telstar Avenue. On the east end, traffic moving southward along Baldwin can access the park and the eastbound I-10, but employees leaving the park cannot turn north on Baldwin due to traffic congestion. The delays are so substantial that the level of service is failing for much of the workday. MTA will not serve the park due to the unpredictability of delays.

### Strategy #2: Improve Access at Rosemead Boulevard and Telstar Avenue and Create Secondary Access at Whitmore

The City should increase the number of turn lanes on Rosemead Boulevard and make signal improvements to allow for peak hour ingress and egress into Flair Park. The City should also extend Rio Hondo Boulevard south to Whitmore Street to provide a secondary egress to Rosemead Boulevard and relieve congestion at Telstar. Third, the City should either build

### Aerial of the Flair Business Park District





a freeway ramp or install a signal at Baldwin Avenue and the I-10.

**CONNECTION BETWEEN FLAIR PARK, DOWNTOWN, AND THE METROLINK STATION**

The El Monte General Plan calls for the revitalization of its downtown through a mixed-use and transit-oriented project at the MTA Bus Station. Several regional bus services (Foothill Transit, MTA, Greyhound, etc.) operate out of the transit station—denoted as the busiest on the west coast. Buses exit the MTA station on an elevated busway that merges with the I-10. However, the busway does not connect to Flair Park.

Moreover, there is a lack of connection between the MTA Station and Metrolink Station in Downtown. Metrolink riders must walk several blocks to the MTA Bus Station or take City transit. Finally, commuters travelling into the MTA Bus and Metro Link Stations cannot directly access Flair Park. The only connection between the MTA Bus Station and Flair Park is a narrow maintenance easement that runs along the San Gabriel River Flood Control channel.

**Strategy #3: Improve Direct Access to El Monte's Downtown**

Although the MTA Station is barely a half mile from Flair Park, it can take 10–30 minutes to reach the park, depending on the time of day. The City should study the feasibility of improving the public easement along the flood control channel to add a lane of travel for public transit to and from the MTA Bus Station. The service should primarily be a shuttle that runs every 30 minutes from the MTA Station. This will allow an anticipated 25,000 employees at Flair Park access to the downtown and MTA Station.

**Strategy #4: Consider Options to Relocate Metrolink Station at Transit Village/MTA Station**

The City of El Monte should study the feasibility of relocating the Metrolink Station to provide a stop at the Transit Village/MTA Station, although this is a very unlikely option given its potential cost. The City could also consider ways to link the Metrolink Station, the MTA bus station, and the Flair Park together with expanded local transit service.

**Issue #2: Land Uses**

As the future employment center and professional office park of El Monte, Flair Park will transition from an industrial park to a mid-rise office park. This fundamental shift in direction requires accompanying land use policies to support the vision for Flair Park.

**CONFLICTING LAND USES**

Flair Park contains a mixture of land uses, including industry, commercial and mid-rise office, educational, and retail uses. In some areas, high quality office buildings have been developed; in others, heavy manufacturing, distribution, and warehousing uses still exist. Cultural institutions, churches, schools and other public uses are also located within Flair Park. Many of the current land uses do not support the vision of Flair Park.

Flair Park should contain a complementary mix of land uses that support one another and the vision for the park. Conflicting uses need to be addressed through proper land and zoning districts. These land uses should also support a round-the-clock environment, which is required of financial back-office operations in Flair Park that operate 24 hours a day.

**UNDERUTILIZED LAND**

Several areas within Flair Park are built to their highest and best use. The Los Angeles County office, Cathay Bank, Wells Fargo, and other financial institutions have made considerable financial investments to locate or relocate their

headquarters to Flair Park. These businesses are critical anchors for Flair Park.

Other areas of Flair Park are significantly underutilized. World War II-era temporary bunkers occupy significant portions of Flair Park and detract from the appearance and viability of surrounding uses and Flair Park. The most underutilized areas are within the boundaries of the Downtown El Monte Redevelopment Project Area. The City could use its redevelopment authority to make significant changes to these underutilized areas.



Examples of land developed at its highest and best use, as well as old WWII-era bunkers that convey an image of blight.

**An illustrative concept of Flair Business Park District and its four subdistricts.**





**Strategy #5: Create a Specific Plan to Guide Land Use**

The land use changes envisioned for Flair Park are significant and inextricably tied to transportation, building design solutions, parks and open space, and other components. To ensure that all of these factors are integrated and support the General Plan vision, the City should create a specific plan for Flair Park.

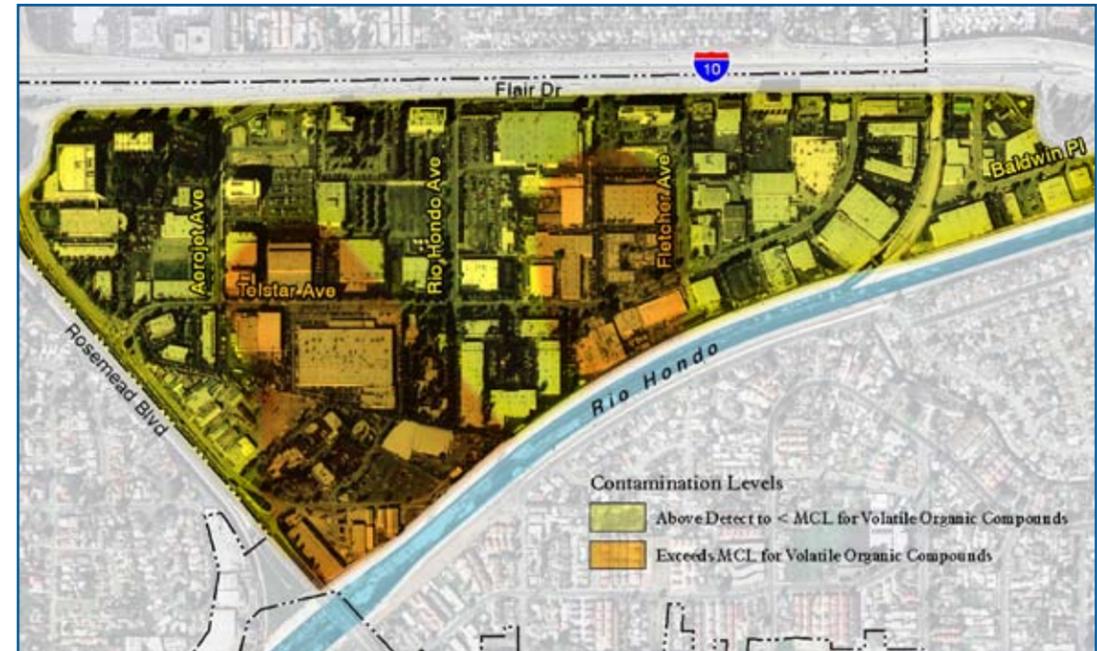
The specific plan should create several subdistricts that are designed to leverage its unique assets: its freeway frontage, relocation of financial businesses, and adjacency to the Rio Hondo River Channel. Color coded on the adjacent map, these subdistricts are:

- **Finance Row.** The freeway frontage that spans Flair Park will be home to major financial institutions: Cathay Bank, Wells Fargo, East West National, and other financial institutions. This frontage will present a striking iconic skyline from the I-10.

- **Gateway District.** At the convergence of Rosemead Boulevard and the Rio Hondo River, the Gateway district signals entry into Flair Park, with low- to mid-rise buildings transitioning to the high-rise buildings and views of the San Gabriel Mountains.
- **Riverfront District.** Flanking the southern edge is the Riverfront District, an area occupied by smaller-scale land uses that provide a transition from the residential areas south of the river to the more intense office uses in Flair Park.
- **Hospitality District.** The Hospitality District will anchor the eastern edge of Flair Park, providing short or extended stay or conference facilities for corporate visitors and international business activity.

These four subdistricts are intended to be complementary and support the Class A environment, property values, and employment generation potential envisioned for Flair Park.

**Potentially Contaminated Sites in the Flair Business Park District**



**Issue #3: Environment Contamination and Opportunities**

Transforming Flair Park into a Class A office environment will require a series of amenities associated with higher office rents. A number of long-standing environmental issues must be addressed before the vision can be achieved.

**GROUNDWATER CONTAMINATION**

The groundwater is contaminated with synthetic organic compounds and other contaminants from past industrial and commercial activities. The EPA has designated portions of the San Gabriel Basin, including Flair Park, as a federal Superfund site and established the El Monte Operable Unit to propose treatment strategies to cleanup the groundwater.

As the site of a World War II-era airport and location of defense manufacturers, Flair Park appears to have areas that contain contaminants in the immediate soil. While no site-specific soil testing has occurred, the presence of contamination is considered likely. To allow for development of these areas, several sites within Flair Park may require the removal of toxic contaminants.

**Strategy #6: Expedite Cleanup of the Superfund Site in Flair Park.**

Cooperate with the San Gabriel Water Quality Authority to expedite cleanup and remediation of groundwater pollution in the El Monte Operable Unit. The City should work aggressively through the San Gabriel Water Basin Authority to expedite cleanup. The presence of ongoing litigation creates a potential constraint to the transformation of Flair Park.

**Strategy #7: Brownfield Cleanup**

Require property owners to fully cooperate with local, state, and federal agencies and to fund the full cleanup of former heavy industrial properties prior to selling or transferring the property.

The City should maintain a policy of requiring cleanup, not paving over contaminated areas. The presence of, or perceived concerns over potential brownfields are a significant deterrent to the full utilization of Flair Park.

**OPEN SPACE RESOURCES**

Flair Park is flanked by flood control channels on its south side. These channels are concrete lined and devoid of vegetation. In many areas, graffiti mars the appearance. An access road runs parallel along the channel, allowing for pedestrian access. The City is working with local non-profits through the Emerald Necklace Vision and Plan to create a 17-mile network of linear parks along its flood control channels. The proposed improvements include:

- Bicycle and pedestrian trails
- Planting of a corridor of trees
- Water features and native plants
- Interpretative signs

Flair Park is devoid of parks, open space, pedestrian paths, and recreational amenities. There is also a lack of trees, except for an urban forest planted by the Wells Fargo Operations Center on their site. Providing open space and a community forest would help beautify Flair Park, reduce noise generated from the freeway, provide air quality benefits, and help create an environment that can command higher rents.

**Strategy #8: Implement Emerald Necklace Vision Projects**

The City should expedite the greening of the riverbanks along the San Gabriel River through the implementation of Emerald Necklace-based projects. The scale and complexity of the overall project is massive; however, incremental improvements can stimulate significant change. Although these properties are under control of the Los Angeles Flood Control District, the City should lobby at the state and federal level to support greening projects.



Current condition of the adjacent flood control channels.



The urban forest planted on the Wells Fargo site.

**Strategy #9: Create Open Space Opportunities**

Although Flair Park clearly presents an economic and employment opportunity, the City should diligently work through the specific plan process to create ample open spaces, an integrated pedestrian path system, and a network of landscaped streets that improve the



A conceptual vision of the flood control channels' future edge conditions, providing landscaped trails and open spaces.

image and identity of Flair Park. These types of improvements will not only improve the appearance of Flair Park, but will also promote long-term economic goals.

**Issue #4: Design**

Higher profile businesses seeking a premium Class A environment will look for amenities for their employees, business visitors, and themselves. Standard amenities include some level of parks and open space, well-designed roadways that contribute to efficient circulation, restaurants and supporting uses that cater to employees and clients, and a distinctive identity that draws corporate headquarters. As an industrial park, Flair Park currently lacks these amenities.

**Strategy #10: Create Central Parks and Monuments**

A specific plan could create a central park for the district. The park should have fountains, landscaping, monuments, cultural and historic markers, public art, and pedestrian amenities. The central green space could serve as a focal point and landmark symbolizing Flair Park. The central park should be augmented by a series of smaller, interconnected linear parks. Public and private plazas should be designed with the following features:

- Ample seating with quality furniture
- A central focal point such as a monument
- Public space with public art and fountains
- Combinations of sun and shade
- Public space framed by buildings

**Strategy #11: Create a Series of Interconnected Parks and Greenways**

Flair Park should be linked together with a coordinated system of paths and walkways with



ample pedestrian amenities and treatments. The pathway system should link buildings, major plazas, and gathering places together. All pedestrian paths should lead to the central park and to the San Gabriel River Channel.

The pathways should be well-defined, with colored paving on walkways, distinctive lighting, wayfinding signage, native landscaping, and seating areas. Cultural markings along the path could remind visitors and employees of Flair Park's storied airfield and aviation past. Cultural markers could also be included to reflect the international business and cultural institutions located in the park.

As mentioned under the Environmental section, the Emerald Necklace represents the best opportunity to transform the image of El Monte. To leverage this asset, the City should improve the Rio Hondo River by installing:

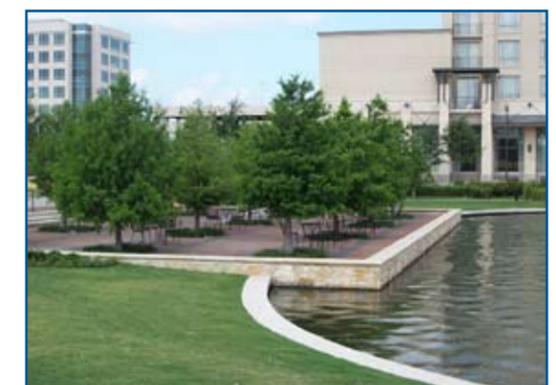
- Linear park and trails along the river
- Mini-parks at key locations along the river
- Trees and native habitat planted along the riverbed
- Cultural and historical references
- Bicycle paths and multi-use trails

**Strategy #12: Beautify Freeway Access**

Coordinate with CalTrans to beautify on-ramps and off-ramps to the I-10 with coordinated

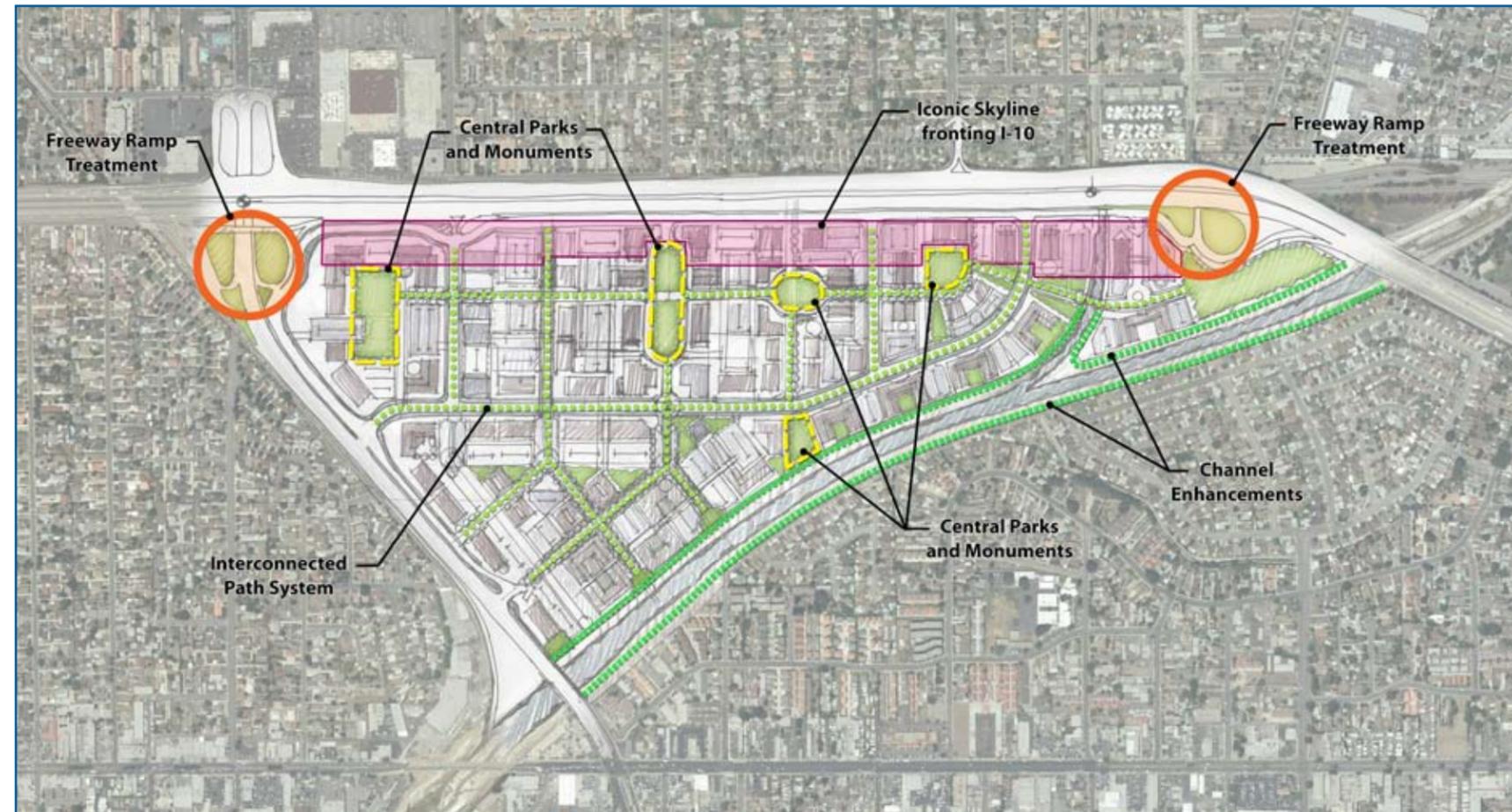


and thematic presentation, evidenced by lush landscaping, carefully placed trees, rock features, and other landscape amenities suited to the configuration of the ramps.





### Recommended Design Improvements in the Flair Business Park District



#### Strategy #13: Improve Streetscapes

Develop a streetscape improvement plan that uniquely defines Flair Park, improves the pedestrian experience, and helps make it a special place. Include:

- **Street Trees.** Use unique street trees to denote Flair Park, provide shade for walking, and beautify the streetscape.
- **Sidewalk and Crosswalk Improvements.** Employ distinctive paving or treatment at key intersections.
- **Lighting.** Install pedestrian-oriented lighting fixtures (low height and intensity) in primary pedestrian areas.

- **Signage.** Provide graphic wayfinding designs with unique logos to differentiate Flair Park from other areas in the City.

#### Strategy #14: Create Design Guidelines for Office Buildings

To support a premium office environment, the City should create design guidelines that promote quality professional office buildings and establish an iconic skyline along the I-10. Office buildings should provide a view of the San Gabriel Mountains to its occupants and clients. The intensity of office development should step down gradually in scale in relation to uses along the Rio Hondo River.

#### Issue #5: Economy

Southern California’s headquarters for Pacific Rim finance and trade—this is the Flair Park of tomorrow. Despite its unparalleled freeway office location between downtown Los Angeles and Ontario, easy commute for a large, skilled, and educated labor force, and growing financial and government sector, Flair Park has been unable to achieve its vision due in part to the lack of an economic development plan.

The key to Flair Park’s economic success is not only vision, but a solid economic development plan that improves the business reasons for choosing a Flair Park location.

#### Strategy #15: Create Appropriate Regulatory Environment

Create office development standards, by-right permitting processes, and regulatory incentives that foster speculative development of mid-rise offices. This includes prohibiting larger investments and land uses that are inconsistent with or do not further the long-term vision of Flair Park, such as industrial uses or low density housing.

#### Strategy #16: Establish a Business Relocation Program

Although certain uses are inconsistent with Flair’s vision, the City Council values its current business community. The City should establish, fund, and maintain a program to assist businesses that are inappropriate or do not want to remain in the future Flair Business Park to relocate to appropriate areas based on the updated General Plan land use plan.

#### Strategy #17: Utilize Regulatory and Redevelopment Incentives

Fortunately, much of the area is in a redevelopment project area. The City should use its authority judiciously to encourage the consolidation of parcels, purchase or acquire parcels as needed at fair market values, and use tax increment financing as a means to fund infrastructure improvements.

#### Strategy# 18: Establish Business Visitation Program

The City should interview firms engaged in Pacific Rim trade and finance to identify their business needs and location criteria and address the locational needs of these firms to create a competitive business location. The City should also reactivate the Flair Business Park Association to provide a forum for business

involvement and oversight of a potential Flair Park specific plan.

#### Strategy #19: Establish Business Improvement District

The City should create a property-based business improvement district to help fund the physical, environmental, and design improvements to transform Flair Park into a Class A office park.

#### Strategy #20: Create a Branding and Marketing Plan for Flair Park

Flair Park will need a new image and marketing angle to promote its status as a center for international finance and commerce. The City should create a brand image and a marketing communications plan to communicate the advantages of a Flair Business Park location to target businesses, brokers, and site-selection consultants.

#### Strategy #21: Establish Partnerships to Market Flair Park

Work with and establish new economic development marketing partners, including the Flair Business Park Association and Chamber of Commerce, to market the advantages of Flair Business Park. The City should also seek to establish new partnerships with various industry groups to help advertise the advantages of Flair Park to desired future tenants.



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## Downtown El Monte

### Introduction

El Monte's Downtown has always represented the heart of El Monte and the gateway to the San Gabriel Valley. In the late 1800s, Valley Boulevard was the only road and served as the Butterfield Stagecoach stop between Los Angeles and San Bernardino. Nearly a century later, this early Main Street evolved into the Valley Mall, and adjoining shopping areas were added to the Downtown.



Historic picture of Valley Boulevard in the late 1800s.

Today, the El Monte Downtown district has expanded to an area of approximately 200 acres, bordered by the Rio Hondo River, the Southern Pacific Railroad, and residential neighborhoods south of the I-10. The Downtown contains an eclectic mix of residential and nonresidential land uses, yet still functions as the core of the community and focus of intense interest.

### General Plan Context

The El Monte General Plan update, currently underway, envisions a new role and prominence for the Downtown as expressed in the following vision statement:

*Downtown El Monte is a mixed-use, mixed-income, and cultural heart of El Monte that epitomizes pride and opportunity. As the*

*center of the community, its historical role is augmented by new housing, retail, office, parks, and cultural facilities. The Downtown takes advantage of transit-oriented development. The population is diverse, the architecture is human-scaled, and the character is authentic to El Monte.*

### A DOWNTOWN OF MANY FACES

The El Monte Downtown is comprised of an eclectic mix of land uses. Within this mix, five subdistricts serve different uses, each with supporting roles. These districts are:

- **Civic Center.** The Civic Center district is the eastern gateway and serves as the governmental core. This area is anchored by City Hall offices, Los Angeles County Superior Court, educational uses, and police station. Other governmental and public uses also extend into other districts.
- **Valley Mall.** The Valley Mall and Environs covers an area bounded by the railroad tracks, Santa Anita Boulevard, and Ramona Boulevard. The subdistrict is anchored by the Valley Mall, a traditional outdoor main street. With several blocks of street-facing frontage and tree-lined sidewalks, it connects the Civic Center to the Transit Village.
- **Cultural District.** Extending along Tyler Avenue south of the I-10, the Cultural District is the heart of El Monte and home to the Community Center, historic museums, Jack Crippen Senior Center, Aquatics Center, Arceo Memorial Park, and El Monte High School. It is a well-known place for street fairs, concerts, community gatherings.
- **Downtown Residential.** The Downtown also contains an eclectic mix of housing projects and small distinct neighborhoods south of Ramona Boulevard or along Tyler Avenue north of Downtown. The residential fabric of this area is well established with small

### Existing conditions throughout the Downtown's subdistricts

3. Valley Mall



2. Santa Fe Trail Historical Park



1. El Monte MTA Bus Station



4. City of El Monte Civic Center



5. City of El Monte Community Center



### Downtown District and Subdistricts





single-family homes. The Downtown contains a significant amount of senior housing.

- Transit Village.** The Transit Village is home to the MTA Bus Station, the largest transit station on the west coast. It is also home to the proposed 60-acre, regionally significant, mixed-use community that integrates public transit, housing, parks and open space, retail, business, and entertainment. This signature project will anchor the Downtown.

**Issue #1: Land Use and Economic Development**

The General Plan envisions the Downtown core as a destination that attracts customers from throughout the San Gabriel Valley. To plan for the Downtown, the City should foremost develop a specific plan for the entire area that encompasses the various unique subdistricts. Second, an economic plan must be developed to leverage and maximize the various economic development opportunities.

The following development opportunities should be integrated into the General Plan update, specific plan, and the appropriate redevelopment implementation plan.

**Strategy # 1: Encourage Development of Santa Fe Trails Plaza**

The Santa Fe Trails project is located in the Valley Mall environs, and is bounded by Valley Boulevard, Santa Anita Avenue, the Southern Pacific Railroad, and Tyler Avenue. This project area covers an existing auto-dependent convenience center, underused commercial uses, and dilapidated residential units.

This area should be developed to capitalize on the convenience niche in the Downtown area. However, the city may wish to provide linkages to Main Street El Monte to allow for cross-selling.



Conceptual Vision of Valley Mall

**Strategy #2: Transform Valley Mall into a Regional Destination**

A large portion of consumer spending follows the social and experiential aspects. These shopping trips provide social interaction and pleasurable shopping experiences as the primary purpose. Areas that provide for socialization, entertainment, and pleasant shopping experience compete well for this type of consumer spending. This shopping experience is often provided by traditional outdoor main street malls.

The Valley Mall provides a hybrid experience of convenience and comparison shopping but little entertainment. Its layout and design, however, are conducive to the socializing and entertainment retail experience. The Valley Mall's retailers primarily serve the local trade area, but it has the potential to attract consumers from a much larger, regional trade area.

Transforming Valley Mall into a retail destination requires careful planning. The City should conduct regular market studies to identify gaps in the retail mix, formulate strategies to capitalize on the regional trade area's lifestyle segments, and attract retailers with a broad regional appeal. The Valley Mall, like many downtowns, can offer an authentic retail and social experience that will compete very well for socializing and entertainment retail spending.

The City should work with the Downtown business association to help them understand the benefits of creating a warm, welcoming social experience for shoppers, and then create a business improvement district to fund improvements that maximize the shopping experience and the economic success of the Downtown. The City should also work with the Downtown business association to host events and create a marketing and public relations campaign for the Valley Mall.

**Strategy #3: Create a Distinct Identify for the Transit Village**

The Transit Village Specific Plan is a groundbreaking effort to create a 60-acre regionally significant, mixed-use community that integrates public transit, residential, retail, commercial, recreational, and entertainment uses. The Transit Village is intended to serve as a key activity center linked with the Emerald Necklace.

The Specific Plan has five planning districts, each distinguished by a different purpose:

- Mixed-Use Subdistrict:** This district will provide a mix of commercial, entertainment, retail, and mixed-use residential uses, in both vertical and horizontal forms, on 31 acres.
- Transit Subdistrict:** This district encourages the provision of facilities and services for public transportation that promote the multi-modal use of transit and further enhance transit utilization.
- River Subdistrict:** This district is intended to provide additional open space, including facilities for the periodic collection/detention of stormwater during peak storm events.
- Gateway Subdistrict:** This district provides a place for existing auto dealers and services, but may transition to other uses as transit-related opportunities present themselves.

- Park and Open Space:** This district provides active and passive open space and recreational facilities for uses connected within the Specific Plan and to the regional recreational trail system.

This 60-acre mixed-use project is envisioned as providing a relaxed socializing, entertainment, and retail experience for a more affluent and upscale clientele than are presently attracted to Downtown El Monte. The Transit Village is expected to provide more than 1 million square feet of nonresidential commercial areas. Anticipated uses include various entertainment venues, a large-scale hotel, conference center, child care center, parks and recreation, and other amenities.

To distinguish this area from the Valley Mall and to avoid diluting cross-selling potential, this area should focus on the affluent, upscale clientele originally envisioned by the developers. However, linkages could be explored between the Valley Mall to tap potential synergies. Ramona Boulevard, which is the southern border of the Valley Mall subdistrict, leads directly into the heart of the Transit Village and provides a convenient and natural pedestrian walkway for entering the Transit Village and accessing transit lines.

According to the Transit Village EIR, the project goal is to construct 35 percent (648 units) of the units for rental households and 65 percent (1,202 units) for ownership households. Since the project is within a redevelopment project area, at least 15 percent or 270 units must



Conceptual Illustration of Transit Village

be affordable to low and moderate income households.

The 2008–2014 Housing and Land Use Elements of the General Plan and the Merged Redevelopment Implementation Plan Area should continue to support the development of this project as the key to the revitalization of the Downtown.

**Strategy #4: Improve Stable Downtown Residential Neighborhoods**

South of Ramona Boulevard and extending below the I-10 are the well-established residential districts of the Downtown. This area, though not dilapidated, could benefit from infrastructure improvements, housing rehabilitation loans, and other types of assistance. In addition, the area could benefit from entryway markers to denote its special location and history.



**Strategy #5: Link Professional Uses in the Civic Center Area to other Parts of Downtown**

The Civic Center subdistrict and Ramona Boulevard Corridor contain professional businesses, government institutions, the Superior Court, and school offices. Health care services, such as the El Monte Comprehensive Health Center and smaller clinics, are located in the vicinity. The Civic Center area is relatively builtout and does not represent a significant opportunity to attract private investment in the short term.

However, these types of employers do provide a substantial number of stable and well-paying health-care, education, and government jobs. These jobs also provide an opportunity to capitalize on daytime spending to support and enhance the prospects of retail businesses. The City should establish working relationships with these employers to leverage their purchasing power to support the Downtown.

**Issue #2: Transportation**

The Downtown has a complex land use and transportation fabric that presents significant opportunities and challenges. In pursuing the revitalization of the Valley Mall, transformation of the transit center, and other key development opportunities, the City should investigate the feasibility of critical transportation improvements.

**RAMONA-BADILLO RAPID TRANSIT CORRIDOR**

The MTA Transit Station was built in 1973 along with the 11-mile El Monte Busway that connects to Downtown Los Angeles. More than 2,000 park-and-ride spaces in surface lots surround the station. More than 1,000 riders board buses at this facility and another 20,000 pass through the station each day.

The cities of Baldwin Park, Covina, West Covina, and Pomona have begun to explore the feasibility of a Rapid Bus Corridor that will run from the Cal

Poly campus in Pomona along Arrow Highway, Badillo Street, and Ramona Boulevard to the Transit Village Station in El Monte. Although in the discussion stage, this concept supports the economic development and mobility goals of each jurisdiction.

Implementation of this rapid bus corridor concept would create significant opportunities for revitalizing Ramona Boulevard. Land uses along this corridor, particularly the south side, are highly underutilized, irregular in size, and in need of significant revitalization. Parcels would need to be consolidated and potentially turned into a greenway to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle routes.

**Strategy #6: Continue to Explore the Feasibility of the Ramona-Badillo Transit Corridor**

The City of El Monte and its participating partners should examine the feasibility of a Ramona-Badillo transit corridor concept along with SCAG. Partners should also work closely with Cal Poly Pomona to study the feasibility of the project, in association with university lab classes in planning and transportation.

**METROLINK CONNECTION**

The Metrolink line runs along the Southern Pacific Railroad line through El Monte and stops at the intersection of Tyler Avenue and Valley Boulevard. However, the Metrolink train does not stop at the Transit Village. Commuters wishing to take a bus must walk several blocks to access the Transit Station. The City's local transit service, El Monte Transit, currently provides hourly shuttles to the Transit Village.

The lack of direct connection between the Metrolink Station and MTA Transit Center presents a challenge in coordinating riding schedules. During inclement weather, the distance is too far to walk or bicycle. Even during good weather, the City does not have an

identifiable and walkable path for pedestrians. Addressing the connectivity issues between the MTA Transit Station and the Metrolink Station will assist in maximizing the ridership for both modes of transit.

**Strategy #7: Coordinate Schedules with MTA, Foothill Transit, and El Monte Transit**

The City should continue to work with the various transit providers to coordinate schedules and shuttles to and from each mode to increase the ease of transfer between modes. This may include establishing an ongoing tri-agency forum to discuss transit options. Such a forum could also discuss alternative modes of accessing the two sites, including pedestrian routes, bicycle routes, taxis, or other modes of transportation.

**DOWNTOWN INTERSECTIONS**

In 2007, the City of El Monte retained the California Local Government Commission and partners to conduct a conceptual study of the greater Downtown. The study was intended to identify opportunities for transportation improvements and land use concepts to create a more vibrant and pedestrian-oriented experience for residents, visitors, and businesses.

**Strategy #8: Conduct Study on Downtown Intersections and Road Diets**

The City of El Monte could commence a detailed engineering and transportation study of the feasibility of implementing the following improvements and ideas suggested by the Local Government Commission:

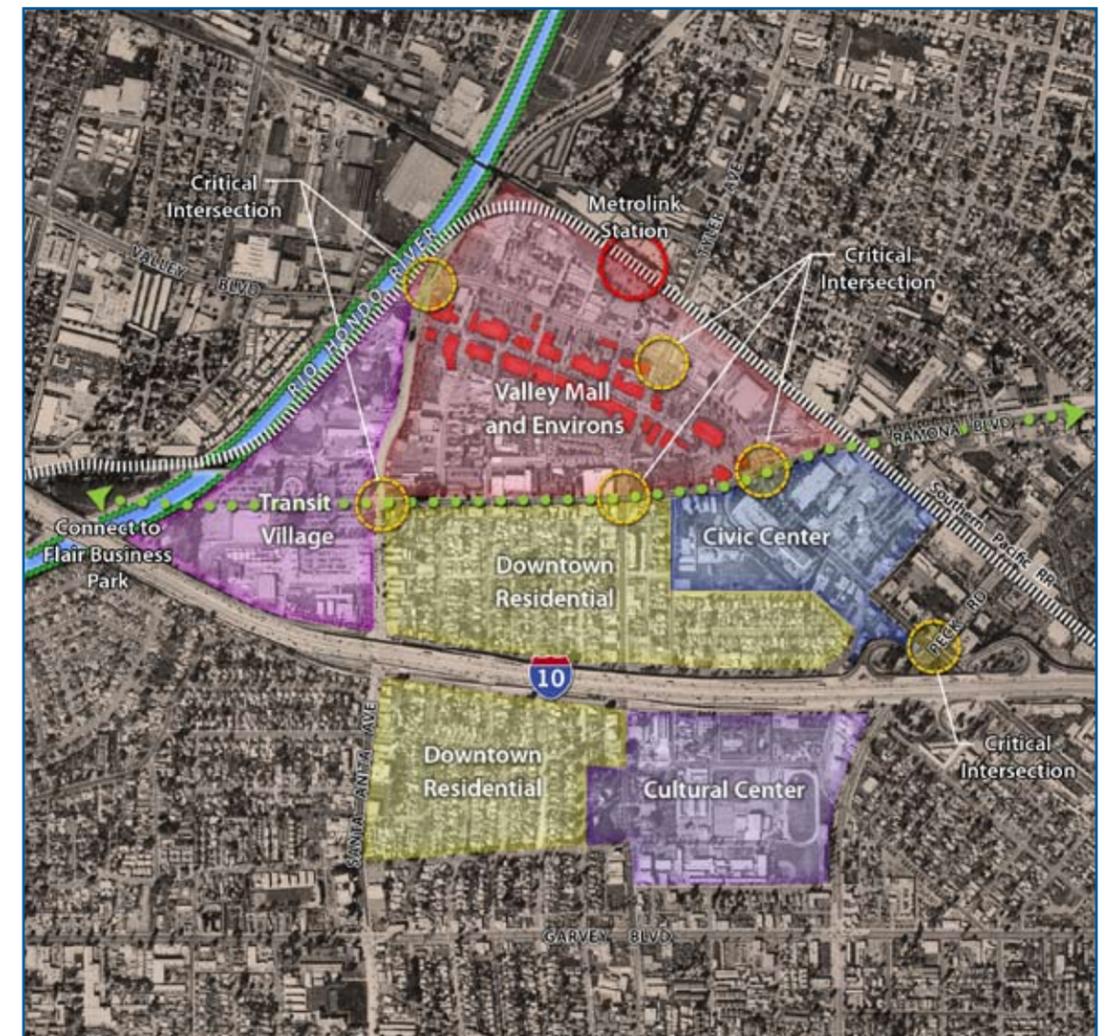
- **Install street roundabouts** at the intersections of Tyler Avenue and Valley Boulevard, Valley Mall/Ramona Boulevard and Valley Boulevard, Santa Anita Avenue and Valley Boulevard, and Santa Anita Avenue and Ramona Boulevard.

- **Consider reducing the number or width of lanes** on Valley Boulevard (between Santa Anita Avenue and Ramona Boulevard), on Ramona Boulevard (between Valley Boulevard and Santa Anita Avenue), and Santa Anita Avenue (between the I-10 and Valley Boulevard).
- **Install traffic-calming and pedestrian features** such as reduced travel lane widths, new bike lanes, raised medians, widened sidewalks, and extended curbs at intersections.



Existing Metrolink Station

**Transportation Issues in the Downtown District**





- Change land use patterns by allowing for mixed/multi-use opportunities on surface parking lots on the north and south side of the Valley Mall.
- Extend Ramona Boulevard west from Santa Anita Avenue through the Transit Village site to provide a second access road across the Rio Hondo Channel and connect to Flair Park.

**Issue #3: Design**

Creating an authentic Downtown experience is a key goal of the General Plan. This requires considerable attention to creating pedestrian paths, streetscapes, architectural treatments, gathering places, and other amenities to produce an environment conducive to shopping, entertainment, and socializing.

**PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS**

**Strategy #9: Link the Various Activity Nodes and Gateways in the Downtown**

The City should create a pedestrian plan that links the various activities center within the Downtown. The pedestrian path should originate at the City's Cultural District at the southern edge of Tyler Avenue. The Cultural Center is the heart of most civic activities in El Monte. The path should run northward to the Valley Mall, where green infrastructure should be installed on surface parking lots and along the Mall. The path should also connect to the Transit Village, either moving southward on Santa Anita Avenue or westward along Ramona Boulevard. Finally, the path should circle down back through the residential neighborhoods.

**Strategy #10: Create a Comprehensive Streetscape Plan**

The City should develop and implement a comprehensive streetscape improvement plan that uniquely defines the Downtown El Monte experience, improves walking experience of

pedestrians, and helps make Downtown a special place. Incorporate:

- Street landscaping consisting of parkways and planters along sidewalk frontages.
- Street trees to denote the Downtown, provide shade for walking, and beautify the streetscape.
- Distinctive paving materials or treatment and sidewalk pullouts at intersections.
- Street furniture such as well-designed benches, trash receptacles, and planters.
- Pedestrian-oriented lighting fixtures (low height and intensity) in pedestrian areas.
- Graphic signage with a unique logo to

identify the Downtown.

- Public art such as murals, ground paintings, sculptures, and banners throughout the Downtown.

**Strategy #11: Create a Memorable Cultural Experience in the Downtown**

The City of El Monte is rich in history and culture. Although few historic resources still remain, the City is defined by the many people who came to California from all over the world, each contributing to the rich cultural legacy in El Monte today. This legacy should be celebrated and recognized in its many forms. The City has a

Cultural Resource Index that notes special places, events, and people in El Monte. These resources should be featured in Downtown. The Downtown should also continue to be the place of numerous civic and cultural events.

**Strategy #12: Create Downtown Residential and Commercial Design Guidelines**

Pursuant to a Downtown specific plan, require that mixed-use projects convey a high level of architectural, design, and landscape quality.

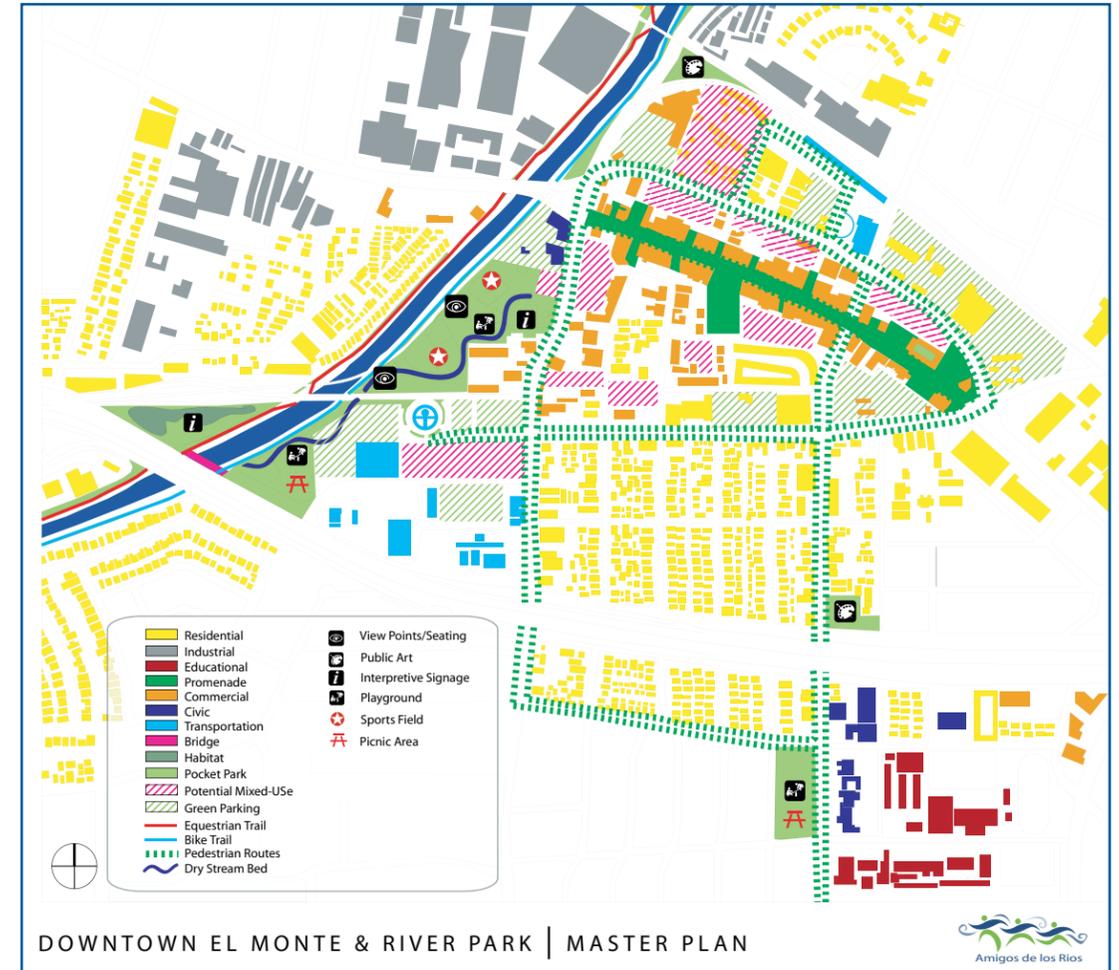
- Visually and physically integrate commercial and residential uses.

- Design buildings and uses to avoid conflicts among functions, such as noise and lighting.
- Provide quality architectural treatment of visible building elevations.
- Incorporate separate and well-defined entries for commercial uses and residential units.
- Design parking areas and facilities to be placed behind the structures and integrated with the building use.
- Install extensive landscaping, where feasible, to soften hardscape and present a more natural living environment.
- Incorporate different architectural styles, variety of rooflines, wall articulation, balconies, window treatments, and varied colors and quality materials on all elevations.

**Cultural Symbols of El Monte**



**Potential Downtown Pedestrian Connections**



DOWNTOWN EL MONTE & RIVER PARK | MASTER PLAN





# Corridors

## Introduction

Few cities in the San Gabriel Valley are so profoundly influenced by the transportation system as El Monte. The City is crossed by a number of major boulevards, namely Peck Road, Valley Boulevard, Garvey Avenue, Durfee Avenue, Rosemead Boulevard, and others. These corridors served as major routes well before the regional freeway system was established. Today, these corridors are the subject of intense discussion in the community.

El Monte's boulevards were originally established with several distinct purposes. The corridors originally functioned as major commercial corridors, but began to fall into disrepair as freeways changed travel patterns. Corridors adopted different functions, such as the movement of goods, services, and commuters. The land uses along El Monte's corridors have also been defined by land use patterns present when they were annexed from the County of Los Angeles.

In 1993, the City began to look at their corridors in a more strategic fashion. A redevelopment project area was established along Durfee Avenue and portions of Garvey Avenue to facilitate industrial and commercial development along these corridors. Although redevelopment efforts have been successful in improving portions of these corridors, other parts still contain underused commercial and industrial uses that are incompatible with nearby residential uses.

## General Plan Context

The El Monte General Plan update began to envision a new role for the many corridors. The General Plan recognized the significant need for housing and saw the corridors as an opportunity to provide new housing opportunities. The City identified three primary corridors covering more

than 2,000 acres and set forth the following vision:

*...to provide a highly-amenitized living and shopping experience characterized by quality mixed/multi-use housing opportunities, a well-managed street environment, and ample greenways, trees, medians, and sidewalks that encourage pedestrian activity, commercial activity, and social interaction.*

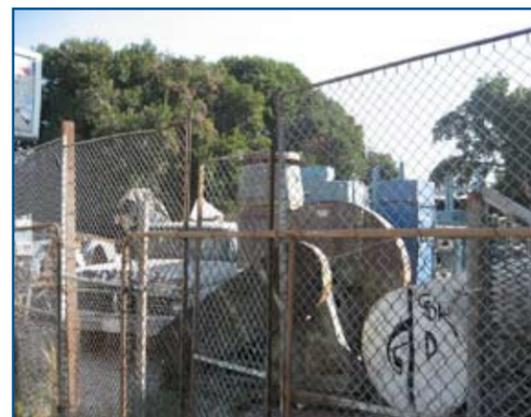
The City has chosen to bring about fundamental land uses changes to Garvey Avenue, Peck Road, and Durfee Avenue to achieve several community benefits:

1. Protect adjacent single-family neighborhoods
2. Recycle incompatible industrial and commercial uses
3. Reduce vehicle emissions and improve mobility and air quality
4. Foster a landscaped street setting
5. Create a significant amount of new housing.

However, several issues stand out as constraints to achieving the City's long-term vision.

## Issue #1: Land Use Incompatibility

The Durfee, Garvey, and Peck corridors contain a mix of heavy industry, underutilized commercial uses, nonconforming single-family homes, surface parking lots, hotels, mobile home parks, and car lots. Virtually every conceivable use



An example of incompatible uses along El Monte corridors.

allowed in the City at some time is present along one of these corridors. Many of the land uses are incompatible with one another, ill-suited to their present location, and detract from the quality of surrounding residential neighborhoods.

## Strategy #1: Adopt a Corridor Plan

To facilitate redevelopment of corridors in a cohesive manner, a comprehensive corridor plan is required. The corridor plan must address the full range of issues at a corridor scale: the buildings, allowable uses, parking and access, circulation, etc. The corridor plan should also be unique to each major corridor. Issues to address include:

- Land use concepts, including preferred locations for housing, commercial nodes, and other land uses.
- Streetscape designs, including landscaping, parkways, and mobility.
- Residential development standards for mixed/multi-use housing.
- Phasing and implementation plan to guide new projects, both in the interim and buildout phases.
- A Master EIR to cover the entire corridor and potentially cover any proposed projects.

## Strategy #2: Prohibited Key Uses

The City will need to prohibit certain industrial and commercial uses along major corridors that detract from residential neighborhoods and adjacent residential uses along the corridors. Several land use programs will assist in this effort:

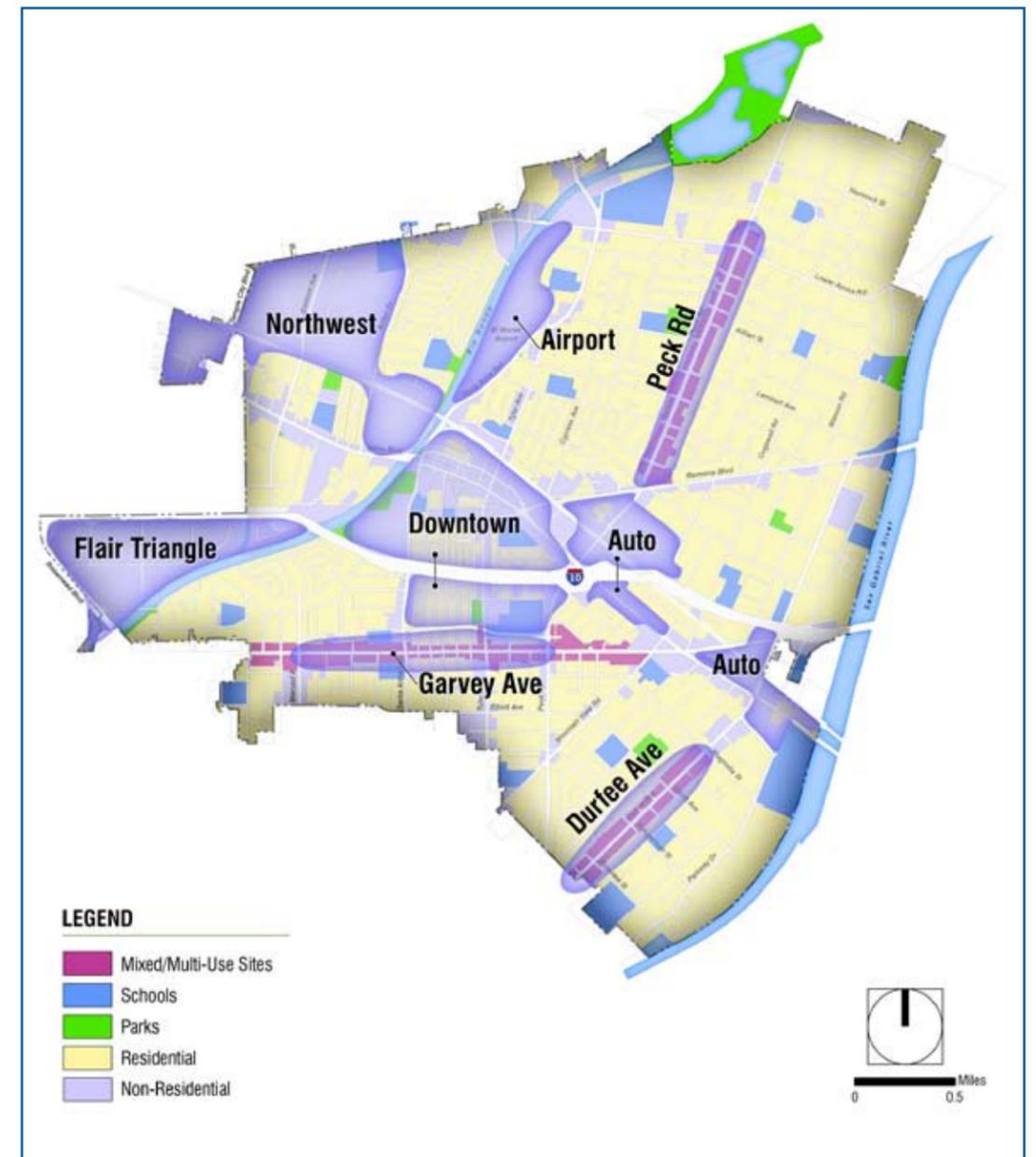
- A program to relocate businesses that detract from the environment to another location in El Monte.

- A nonconforming land use ordinance that prohibits expansion of existing uses along the corridor.
- A list of detailed uses that are compatible with the future vision of the corridor.

## Issue #2: Development Regulations

The General Plan allows for virtually every use along the corridors, due in part to the history of the corridors and to the changes in policy direction over the years. Moreover, the underlying zone allows for a wide range of floor area ratios. Development standards, although uniform for a particular zone, are not tailored

## Residential Corridor Areas in El Monte: Peck Road, Garvey Avenue, and Durfee Avenue





to the unique constraints of corridors: uneven frontage, shallow lots, irregular shaped parcels, multiple street access, and other issues.

**Strategy #3: Revise General Plan and Zoning Designations in Corridor Areas**

The City should redesignate approximately 45 acres of land along the Durfee Corridor for mixed/multi-uses from the City's southern border to Magnolia. Approximately 50 acres of land should be redesignated along Garvey, extending from Five Points to the western edge of the City. The City should also redesignate the vast majority of Peck Road, extending north of the I-10.

The City should establish a mixed/multi-use land use designation and appropriate zone to effect the desired changes. The R-3 and R-4 residential standards and C-1, C-2, and C-3 standards in the development code are not suited to address the complexity of issues inherent with corridor development. Therefore, a new section of the development code should be drafted.

**Strategy #4: Create New Development Standards**

The City should develop residential development standards for mixed/multi-use projects. The density of development should generally range from 25 to 35 units per acre. The height should generally be limited to no more than three stories. Setbacks should be provided and sidewalks widened to allow for a parkway. Higher density ranges should only be allowed for projects that meet City expectations for quality.

The City's Development Code should allow a mix of housing types that address an important lifestyle segment of the housing market in El Monte. With the high cost of single family housing, El Monte has a significant need for quality multiple family and planned residential developments of townhomes, apartments, and senior housing. These types of uses should be strongly considered for the corridors.

**Issue #3: Parcel Size**

The parcel sizes along corridors are a constraint to development. Sites range from 50–200 feet in width and 100–300 feet in depth. The Garvey Corridor experiences the greatest variation in lot sizes, with some areas measuring only 100 feet in depth. Durfee Avenue has the largest number of deep parcels (many are 200 feet in depth), with many of similar size. Peck Road suffers from a large variation in the size and shape of parcels. For fundamental land use change to occur and be successful, the consolidation of lots into sufficiently sized parcels is of great importance.

Transitioning Durfee Avenue, Garvey, and Peck from a mix of industrial, commercial, and other uses to a cohesive mixed/multi-use corridor will require several programs to facilitate its transition.

**Strategy #5: Develop a Lot Consolidation Program**

All the various corridors are comprised of a mix of parcel sizes generally ranging from 150 to 200 feet deep. As part of the reuse of the corridor, the City should fashion a lot consolidation program with density incentives to encourage the consolidation of parcels to preferably one acre. This lot size would facilitate the construction of multiple-family housing projects, including affordable housing. Since the corridor is in a redevelopment project area, the City has significant authority to facilitate lot consolidation through lot acquisition.

**Issue #4: Lack of Unified Design**

The corridors were originally developed when design regulations or guidelines were not in place. Moreover, many of the types of land uses present today predate the City's annexation of those areas. Buildings were often permitted in an incremental fashion, without focusing on their cumulative impact on the corridor. Even sidewalk widths vary along stretches of streets. The visual complexity of these corridors does not present the image desired by the community today.

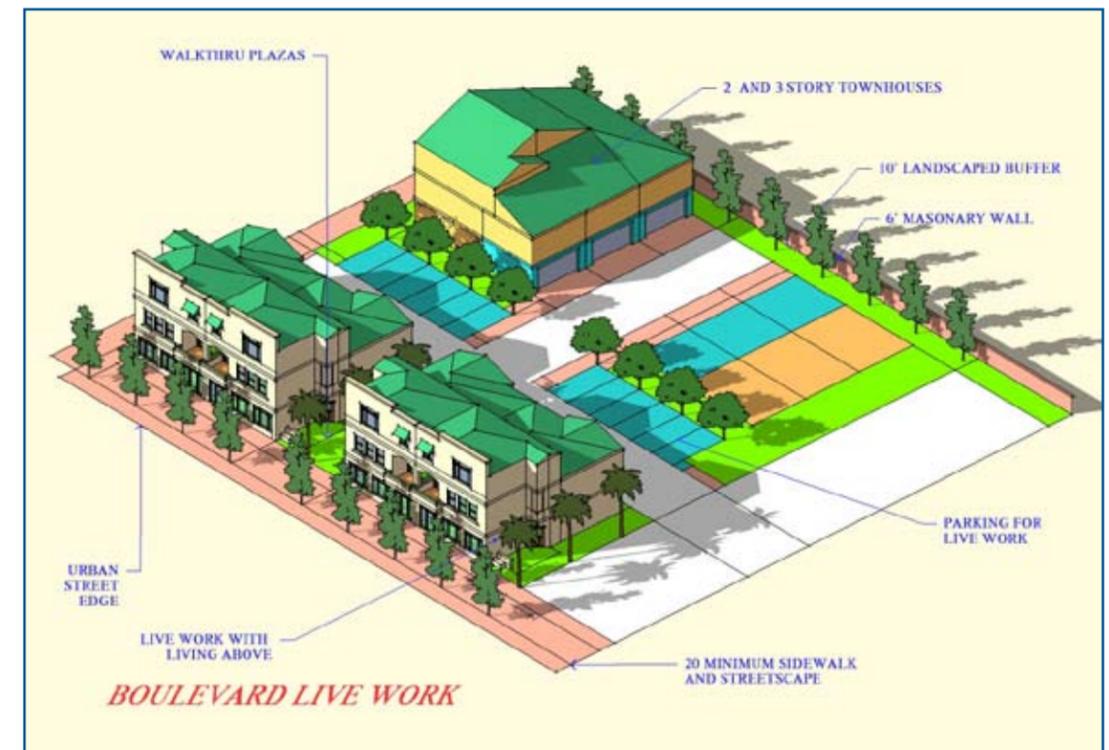
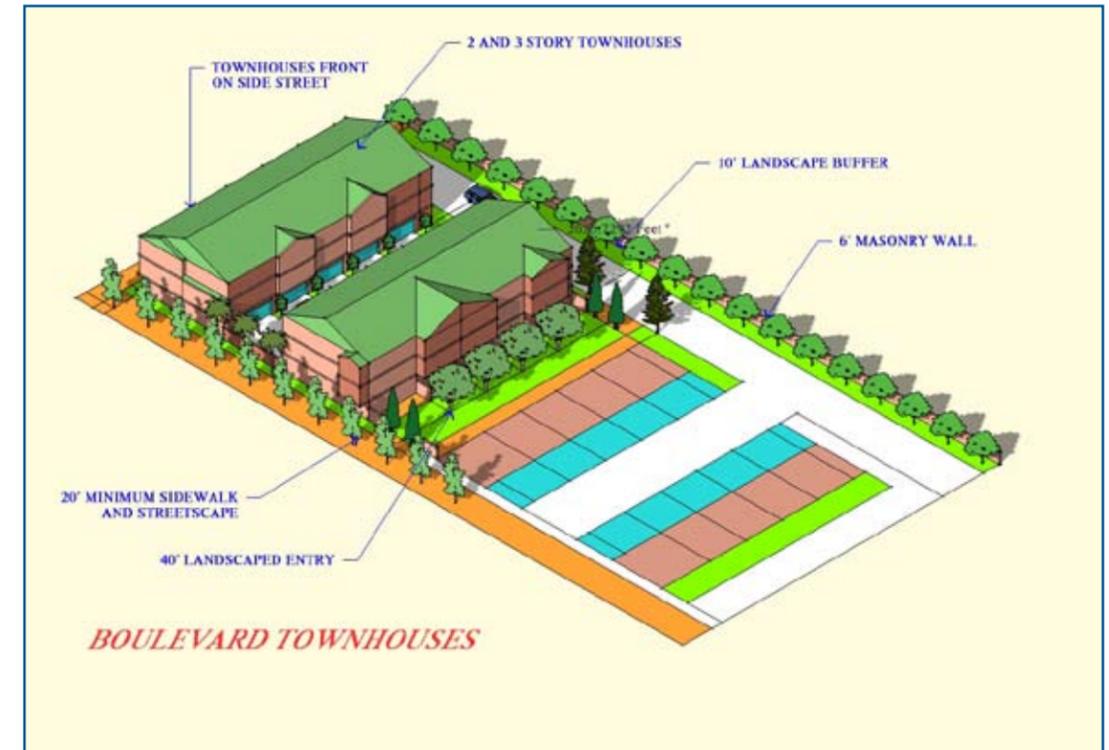
The City desires that new projects convey a higher level of quality, both in terms of the building and site plan design. Projects should be designed to minimize noise, lighting, traffic and other factors on adjacent uses. Pedestrian mobility should be considered as important as the mobility of cars and trucks. Residential and commercial uses must reflect and support a coherent and consistent vision for the entire corridor.

**Strategy #6: Create Housing Design Guidelines.**

In concert with expectations for architecture in the Community Design Element and Corridor Implementation Plan, the City should create design guidelines for the corridor. The following general principles should be reflected:

- **Materials.** Use high-quality, natural building materials, such as stucco, plaster, stone, and wood surfaces. Prohibit reflective glass, glossy surfaces, or poor imitation materials.
- **Durability.** Materials and design should evidence high attention to durability (without sacrificing aesthetics) that will withstand weather, use, and the test of time.
- **Aesthetics.** Structural appearance should incorporate thoughtful design in rooflines, facades, entryways, building orientation, and site layout to create visual interest.
- **Functionality.** Residential buildings must be designed in a manner to fulfill the functional needs of housing, including size of units, parking needs, and other accommodations.
- **Sustainability.** Incorporate green building techniques, energy efficiency, and other sustainable technologies into new housing, balanced with the overriding need for aesthetics.

Conceptual massing models of corridor housing product types.





**Conceptual illustrations of corridor housing types (townhomes on top, live/work below)**



Given the history of development in El Monte, design regulations should be more prescriptive to ensure that new housing clearly meets City standards. However, the nature of corridor development and unique constraints will also require some level of flexibility so that developers can creatively fit projects to the context. This balance between prescriptive and flexible approaches will be a challenge for the City.

**Issue #5: Attractive Streetscapes and Efficient Circulation**

Mixed/multi-use housing along major corridors such as Durfee Avenue and Garvey Avenue is designed to improve the physical appearance of corridors, offer quality housing, and improve neighborhood pride. In order to achieve these objectives, the physical design of the streetscape is critical.

Additionally, all of the corridors are designated as truck routes. The long-term visions for the corridors are not, in many cases, suited for heavy truck traffic. Moreover, the environment along these corridors must be changed to fit a more urbanized yet still residential environment.

**Strategy #7: Construct Green Parkways and Medians**

Given the lack of open space and landscape amenities in El Monte, the City must line corridors with green parkways and/or lush landscaped medians, shade-providing canopy trees, and complete sidewalks. In some cases, the right-of-way is large enough to include medians down the center of the street. In other cases, the City will need to examine moving sidewalks or obtaining additional right-of-way dedications.

Creating or extending redevelopment project areas along additional stretches of roadways may assist the City to acquire sites. Although this task is challenging along certain stretches, acquiring the property needed to improve the streetscape will add value to properties, beautify

the corridors, and create the image desired by residents.

**Strategy #8: Revise Truck Routes**

The City should convert Durfee Avenue, from the southern City limits to Valley Boulevard, from a principal arterial to a secondary arterial and discourage and eventually prohibit heavy truck traffic.

Garvey Avenue will likely remain a thoroughfare for trucks because of its location. The only other major east-west arterials are Valley Boulevard and Lower Azusa Road. In addition, Peck Road also will likely be difficult to reclassify. However, the City should investigate whether truck traffic could be limited to areas near Valley Boulevard to support the Auto District, and prohibited or limited in areas of Peck Road north of the Auto District.

**Strategy #9: Expand Bicycle Lanes and Walkways**

Providing alternatives to the car is highly desirable along the corridors. The City should create a Class 2 bicycle lane along Durfee Avenue, from the southern City limits to Ramona Boulevard, to provide for exclusive or semi-exclusive use by bicycles. Given the oversized street, there is sufficient space for a bicycle lane. Moreover, the City should complete and widen the sidewalk network along this corridor. This may require undergrounding of utility lines. These actions will contribute to mobility goals and further the City's Park and Open Space Element goals.

Although Garvey Avenue could contain bikeways, the volume of traffic and smaller roadway width make this option less feasible. However, certain stretches along Garvey are fronted with parcels less than 100 feet in depth. These parcels are not conducive to quality development. Over the long-term, the City should acquire them and convert them to pedestrian

walkway and pocket parks. On Peck Road, the City should limit its efforts to creating a coherent and complete series of sidewalks.

**Strategy #10: Establish a Comprehensive Streetscape Program**

Arterial streets lined with ample sidewalks of adequate width can provide an environment conducive to walking and pedestrian activity. Streets or greenways with a canopy of native species trees can provide shade for pedestrians, improve aesthetics, and complement street-facing residential and commercial uses. Lush greenways and medians can soften the concrete hardscape and present a unified image of the street.

The City should establish a comprehensive streetscape and landscape program for corridors that include right-of-way improvements to street trees, street lighting, streetscape elements (sidewalk/crosswalk paving, street, furniture), and public signage. Coherent streetscape design is essential to create a desirable environment for housing and pedestrian activity.

Taken together, these strategies will transform the City's corridors into a vibrant and attractive street environment, provide quality housing, and improve air quality and mobility within El Monte.



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## Conclusions

This demonstration project set out to identify land use, economic, and circulation strategies to foster compact development patterns, increase the supply of housing, and promote and incentivize economic revitalization and employment.

A total of 68 strategies were identified for the four districts: Northwest Industrial (NID), Flair Business Park (Flair Park), Downtown, and Corridor District. These strategies range from the creation of new development standards for corridor housing to the improvement of the I-10 connection at Baldwin Avenue to the creation of a system of linear parks.

Many of these strategies were incorporated directly into the City's General Plan update. The demonstration project helped create new mixed-use, high density land use designations; new design regulations and guidelines; and new policies for land use planning and environmental remediation activities in the key districts.

Ultimately, the challenges, opportunities, and recommended strategies revealed four conclusive points.

### 1. The transportation connections must be improved for El Monte to grow economically.

The City of El Monte offers more transportation opportunities to connect to different cities and counties than nearly any other city in Southern California. Traveling within City boundaries, however, can be cumbersome or even impossible. As stated in this report, it can take 10–30 minutes for a person to travel from the Flair Park to the MTA Station located a half-mile away. Additionally, the Baldwin Avenue interchange currently operates at a Level of

Service F despite its role as a direct route to the I-10 for the Flair Park and NID.

Improving the City and achieving its long term vision will require—more than anything else—a commitment to improving the physical, economic, and recreational connections between the four key districts. With improvements at key interchanges and vehicular, pedestrian, and/or transit connections between districts, El Monte will gain access to the growth and purchasing power that comes from the City's existing residents and businesses. These improvements will also encourage new businesses and residents to locate in the City, spurring additional growth and financial support.

### 2. The City should expand its visionary, transit-oriented planning efforts to other districts.

Many of the existing land uses in the NID, Flair Park, and the Corridors need to be changed. Land use regulations need to be revised to phase out certain uses and encourage others that support the City's vision. The City's land use planning should reflect what is desired instead of what has been developed.

The City has recently adopted a visionary plan for a part of the Downtown District: the Transit Village Specific Plan. The Specific Plan is a groundbreaking effort to create a 60-acre mixed-use community that integrates public transit, residential, retail, commercial, recreational, and entertainment uses. This project capitalizes on the City's extensive transit resources and promotes a promising image of El Monte's future.

Additional areas of the City could benefit significantly from transit-oriented specific plans. The corridors of Peck Road, Durfee Avenue, and Garvey could accommodate a large number of medium and high density residential projects and support bus and rail transit services. A comprehensive plan should be prepared for

each corridor and district with a focus on how transit operates and influences development opportunities.

### 3. The storm drainage facilities and potential greenbelts represent an untapped highway.

Beyond the appeal of changing a concrete-lined drainage channel or parking areas into landscaped recreation amenities is the potential to offer access through and between key districts for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.

The storm drainage facilities travel through areas that are inaccessible to or difficult for public vehicular traffic. The inability to quickly travel between Flair Park and the Downtown MTA Station, for example, could be solved through the improvement of the Rio Hondo in accordance with the Emerald Necklace Plan (see back page).

When combined with potential linear and central parks, the channel pathways could allow individuals to travel to and from work or the Downtown separated from the congestion, pollutants, and costs associated with vehicular commutes. Portions of the channel easements may also be appropriate to introduce transit connections.

### 4. A multi-faceted approach should be taken to promoting a business-friendly atmosphere.

The conversion of industrial businesses into Class A mid-rise office complexes will require regulatory, financial, and programmatic incentives and actions. To promote business expansion and create a financial center, the City must first ensure that land is developable and is served by adequate infrastructure. Capital improvements and environmental cleanup of contaminated sites are examples of the types of incentives that will attract new businesses to relocate to El Monte.

The City must also understand what existing and prospective businesses need through a business visitation program and an analysis of incentives packages. Regulatory changes that promote desired uses and prohibit undesirable uses will provide businesses with the reassurance that they will be surrounded by a critical mass of similar and complementary businesses.

The redevelopment of and connection between the four districts will play a large role in determining the future success of El Monte. Through bold vision and resolute progress, the City of El Monte will realize great economic success and create a vibrant, sustainable community for future generations.

## City of El Monte General Plan Vision

**El Monte is a vibrant and safe community that respects its historical and cultural diversity and strives to provide a high quality of life through well-designed neighborhoods, quality education, park and recreational amenities, economic and employment opportunities, and a healthy environment.**

El Monte's Vision is built on six themes:

1. El Monte will be a friendly and welcoming city that provides a safe environment, values family, diversity and community, and one that cherishes, preserves, and builds on our rich history and culture.
2. El Monte will have a balance of safe and stable neighborhood, quality parks and recreational facilities, thriving business and job opportunities, shopping and entertainment venues, and excellent schools.
3. El Monte will be a city where people can easily circulate, safely access community facilities and services by a range of convenient transportation choices, and efficiently connect residents, business, and visitors to the region.
4. El Monte is committed to restoring and preserving its rivers and open spaces, providing adequate parks, promoting connections with the natural environment, and fostering healthy lifestyles.
5. El Monte supports a prosperous local economy that fosters a broad range of business, an entrepreneurial spirit, ample employment opportunities, a competitive and trained workforce, and an excellent standard of living.
6. El Monte will grow in a sustainable way, preserving and enhancing neighborhoods while fostering revitalization and quality development in downtown and along commercial corridors.



The Emerald Necklace Vision and Plan runs through and around the City of El Monte. When realized, this plan will introduce new opportunities for recreation, transportation, and connections between the City's key districts.