



Existing Conditions Report

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Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The City of Carson is preparing an update of its General Plan, which will establish the City's overall approach to development, transportation, environmental quality, and other key topics through 2040. The city's current General Plan dates to 2004, and needs to be updated to reflect opportunities, challenges, and approaches that have emerged in recent years.

The Existing Conditions Report represents one of the first major steps in the General Plan update process. The report provides a baseline of information that will be used at multiple stages throughout the process. This Executive Summary provides an overview of key findings contained within the Existing Conditions Report.

Role of the General Plan

The general plan is a statement of the community's vision of its long-term or ultimate physical form and development policies. The State of California mandates that "...each county and city shall adopt a comprehensive, long-term general plan for the physical development of the county or city, and of any land outside its boundaries which in the planning agency's judgment bears relation to its planning." (Govt. Code 65300). A city's general plan has been described as its development constitution – the set of policies within which development regulations and decisions must fit.

The State mandates that all general plans cover at least seven "elements": land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addition, a city or county may include other "optional" elements; examples of these that jurisdictions have adopted include air quality, health, sustainability, community design, economic development, energy, water and wastewater, and parks and recreation. All elements, regardless of whether they are mandatory or optional, carry equal weight.

The general plan must be "internally consistent;" that is, it should "...comprise an integrated, internally consistent and compatible statement of policies for the adopting agency." (Govt. Code 65300.5). Furthermore, all actions relating to physical development need to be consistent with an adopted general plan. This requirement implying "vertical consistency" means that subdivisions, capital improvements, development agreements, specific plans, zoning, and other land use regulatory actions must be consistent with the general plan.

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Carson General Plan update is to:

- Establish a long-range vision that reflects the aspirations of the community and outlines steps to achieve this vision;
- Establish long-range development policies that will guide City departments, as well as Planning Commission and City Council decision-making;
- Provide a basis for judging whether specific development proposals and public projects are in harmony with plan policies;
- Plan in a manner that meets future land needs based on the projected population and job growth;
- Allow City departments, other public agencies, and private developers to design projects that will preserve and enhance community character and environmental resources, and minimize hazards; and
- Provide the basis for establishing and setting priorities for detailed plans and implementing programs, such as the zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, specific and master plans, and the Capital Improvement Program.

Existing Conditions Report

The Existing Conditions Report will be provided in two volumes. Volume 1 of this report provides information on existing conditions as of December 2017 in the Planning Area, which consists of land within City limits and adjacent areas within its Sphere of Influence (SOI), as well as an analysis of implications these issues will have on the planning process. Volume 2, which will be released in Spring 2018, will include information on vehicles miles traveled, traffic conditions, and noise related to transportation. The Existing Conditions Report will subsequently be used as a basis for facilitating community input on planning issues, priorities, and visions for the future; preparing alternative land use and transportation planning scenarios; formulating policies and implementation actions for the General Plan; and creating the environmental setting portion of the Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan.

Key Findings and Planning Considerations

One of the main purposes of the Existing Conditions Report is to distill planning considerations that should be addressed as the General Plan update process moves forward. Key findings, written in bold type, are important attributes of the Planning Area identified in this Existing Conditions analysis. Following each key finding is an analysis of planning considerations, which examine the ways in which findings may impact decisions that will be made during the General Plan update process. While the key findings and planning considerations listed below are organized by sections of this report, many are cross-cutting and may be applicable to more than one topic.

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

- **The Planning Area's two most predominant existing land uses are industrial and residential.**

Nearly half of the Planning Area is made up of existing industrial uses. An additional quarter is residential, of which single-family residential is the predominant housing type. Both of these land uses are vital to Carson's identity and are growing. The General Plan should consider future demand, development, and design guidelines for these two land uses.

- **Carson's Sphere of Influence (SOI) has a greater proportion of industrial uses than the city itself and differing housing composition.**

The SOI consists predominantly (75 percent) of industrial uses. There are also pockets of mobile home parks, but not many areas of single-family residential use. Many of these mobile home parks are surrounded by industrial uses and are isolated from residential neighborhoods, or commercial and retail centers. The future of the mobile home uses in the unincorporated areas and the City's position on annexation of land may consider different uses for these areas that would need to be explored as part of the General Plan update.

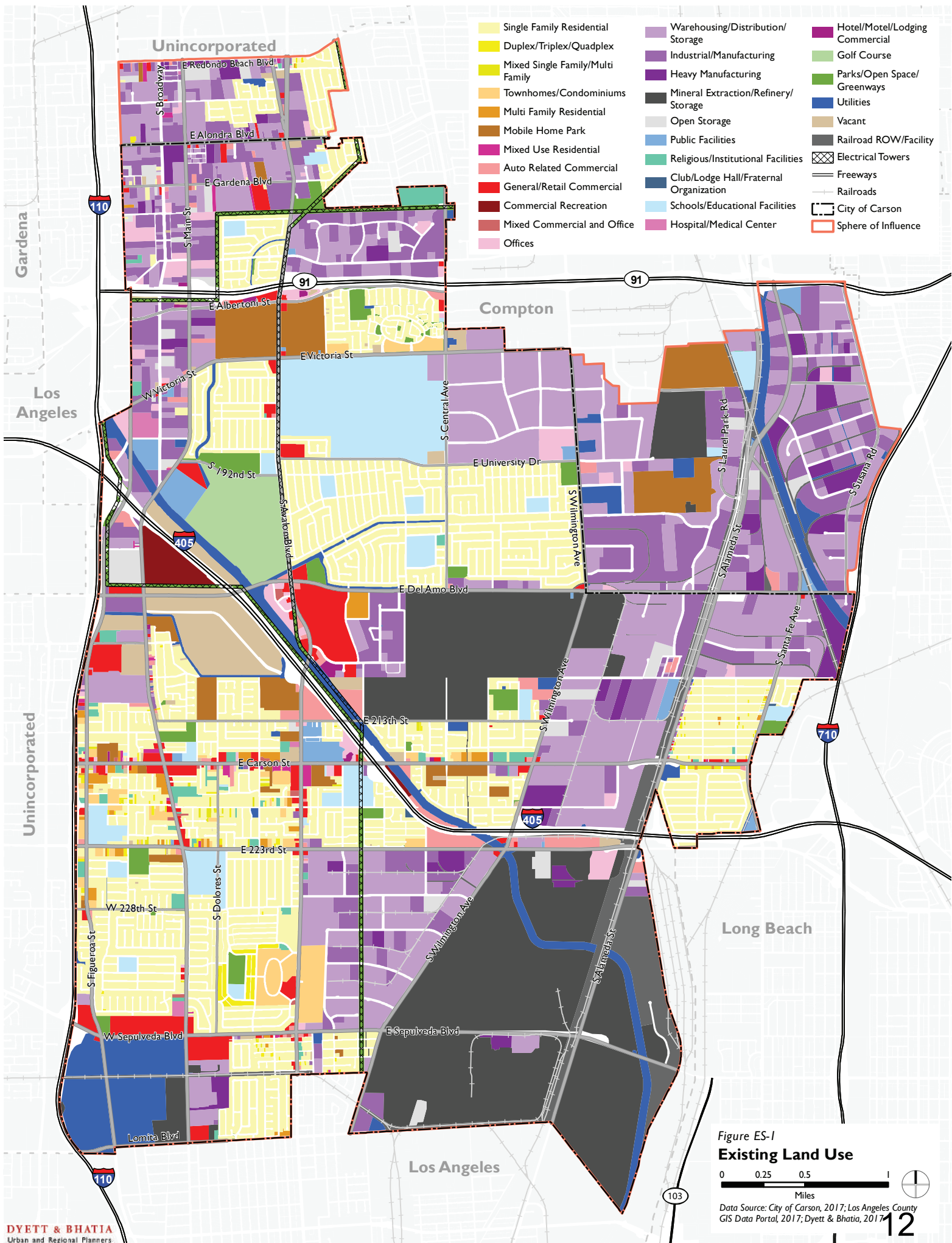


Figure ES-1
Existing Land Use

0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles

Data Source: City of Carson, 2017; Los Angeles County GIS Data Portal, 2017; Dyett & Bhatia, 2017

- **Carson has several specific plans and a Vision Plan that outline goals and concepts for development in certain areas of the city. The information in these plans should align with the General Plan update.**

Though adopted in 2006, the Carson Street Mixed-Use Master Plan is still being implemented and focuses on pedestrian-friendly development. The Carson Vision Plan (2016) outlines an overall land use vision for over 800 acres of retail, commercial, and industrial parcels. Included in the Vision Plan is the 168-acre proposed Boulevards at South Bay development, which is further elaborated on in the Specific Plan adopted in 2006 and updated in 2011. Other specific plans still pertinent to Carson's development are the Avalon Specific Plan and the Panama Specific Plan. Current and relevant information within these existing plans should be incorporated into the General Plan update. If applicable, the General Plan should provide updated information and goals for these neighborhoods as well as other areas covered under more outdated documents.

- **A substantial amount of new development, including housing, warehousing, hospital/medical, retail, and commercial, is currently under construction or planned within the Planning Area.**

Approximately 2.2 million square feet of building area, on over 295 acres of land, is under construction, approved, or under review within Carson. Additionally, nearly 900 new multi-family housing units are also in pipeline. This development pattern could be an opportunity to create a denser, pedestrian-oriented city. Some of this new development has received planning approval to exceed zoning code height requirements through a specific plan process.

- **There are many potential opportunity areas within the Planning Area that could be developed or redeveloped to meet commercial, industrial, or residential needs.**

There are substantial opportunities for new development in the Planning Area. Initial analysis suggests that 1,830 acres of land, or 13 percent of the Planning Area, is either vacant or underutilized based upon the Assessed Value ratio and 1,180 acres have development with a low floor area ratio (FAR). These sites present opportunities for new development or redevelopment. However, many of the sites with the lowest FAR and AV ratios are industrial uses, and while there is potential for denser development, it may not add significant value across all locations. Additionally, many sites along Carson's major commercial corridors are approaching the current maximum allowed FAR. If these locations are identified as priority areas for redevelopment, increasing the allowable FAR for certain commercial zones could significantly increase the number of opportunity sites.

- **Many vacant sites within the Planning Area are brownfields or have some degree of environmental contamination that would require remediation before development.**

The extent of contamination and required remediation could affect the development potential of some of these sites. Uses such as residential or retail might require a higher degree of remediation than industrial or warehousing uses.

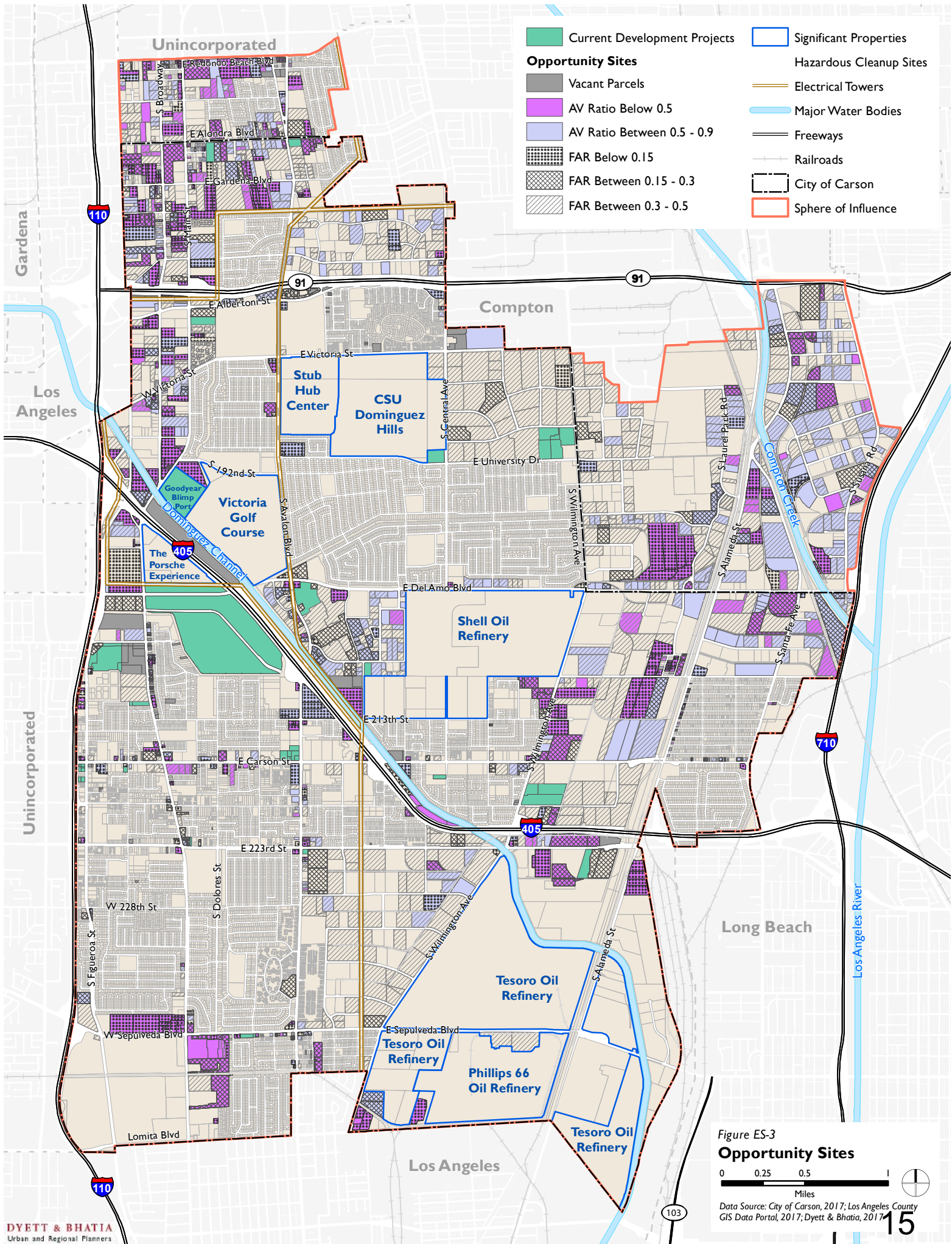


Figure ES-3

Opportunity Sites

0 0.25 0.5 1
Miles

Data Source: City of Carson, 2017; Los Angeles County GIS Data Portal, 2017; Dyett & Bhatia, 2017

COMMUNITY DESIGN AND CHARACTER

- **Urban design and streetscape improvements along Carson Street create a strong sense of place.**

Signage, landscaping, streetscape, and street furniture improvements along Carson Street, together with new development, is shaping a downtown-like identity for the corridor, and making this area feel welcoming to bicyclists and pedestrians. In addition, street signage and furniture branded with the Carson logo visually reinforces Carson's identity. Incorporating these improvements on other corridors may create a more distinctive Carson streetscape identity throughout the city.

- **New residential and mixed-use structures are generally being built at a higher densities relative to existing development in the Planning Area.**

Many new multi-family residential and mixed-use structures, such as the pipeline buildings at 21721 Moneta Avenue, 402 East Sepulveda Boulevard, 21205 South Main Street, 600 West Carson Street, and 20330 South Main Street are being built at densities higher than 20 dwelling units per acre. Because most of Carson's existing residential development contains less than 20 dwelling units per acre, these new buildings will likely occupy a greater portion of their lots and be taller than most existing residential development. The City continually needs to assess where and under what circumstances denser structures are appropriate in order to ensure their design is contextual to their surroundings.

- **City form is predominantly defined by key corridors that divide the city into residential, industrial, and commercial clusters.**

The predominance of residential and industrial land uses in shaping city form suggest that both are equally important to the identity of Carson. Therefore, when considering urban design improvements, design (street trees, streetscaping, building scale, etc.) should be appropriate to both industrial and residential uses. In addition, commercial uses most often line key corridors, and form edges to industrial and residential uses. Commercial uses and their design should also be compatible with nearby industrial and residential uses.

- **The urban core of Carson has a wide range of residential densities, street patterns and block sizes. Master planned neighborhoods have a more consistent character throughout.**

Because Carson's residential neighborhoods near the core of the city (between roughly 213th Street and 223rd Street) have a mix of housing types, residential density, and lot sizes, a variety of sizes and scales of new housing types (single-family, apartment structures, townhomes, two-flats, etc.) would fit into the character of this area. At the same time, this variety also means these neighborhoods do not have a consistent look and feel. In contrast, many newer neighborhoods, such as Dominguez Hills Village, have more consistent building heights, parcel sizes, and housing types throughout because they were planned all at one time. For future residential development, the City should determine whether new neighborhoods should replicate the mixed character of the urban core or the consistent character of master planned neighborhoods.

- **With corridors providing some of the principal reuse and redevelopment potential, Carson has the opportunity to shape a new identity for many of its key corridors.**

Many of the key corridors throughout the city, including Main Street and Avalon Boulevard, have vacant or underutilized sites that can accommodate new development. Large opportunity sites near the Planning Area's major freeways can accommodate regional-serving commercial, while smaller opportunity sites further away from the freeway can accommodate redevelopment that will serve the local market. Redevelopment along Main Street, Avalon Boulevard, and the eastern part of Carson Street can continue the momentum of new development along Carson Street to other parts of the city, or take on an entirely new character.

ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

- **Carson is entering a new development phase after a low-growth period in the city.**

The majority of Carson's building stock is older; however, significant new development of housing, retail, and industrial space has picked up in recent years. Proposed, approved, and under construction projects will continue this growth trend into the future. Increasing the amount of and updating the building stock within Carson has the ability to absorb more population growth, employment, and contribute to the city's economy.

- **Carson's landscape is largely dominated by industrial uses, which are projected to continue growing.**

Historically, Carson's industrial, warehousing, and refinery uses have helped shape its identity and have significantly contributed to the city's economy. Industrial vacancy rates in the city remain low and more supply is being added. Carson's industrial sector should address trends in the shifting typology of industrial and manufacturing uses, including a greater need for warehouse space, and include flexible spaces that can change over time.

- **Diversify the types of retail and office space.**

The General Plan should address types of retail and office spaces and uses that may increase spending and decrease vacancy rates. Leakage has been reported in the clothing, restaurant, movie theater, and grocery store sectors, which may be opportunities for future development within the Planning Area, especially in high-visibility regional corridors.

- **California State University Dominguez Hills is planning to increase enrollment through 2040, which presents an economic opportunity for Carson but poses challenges as well.**

With plans to increase the student population by over 40 percent over the next 20 years, the CSU Dominguez Hills campus will have to update many of its facilities, increase jobs and housing, and provide amenities to attract students and faculty to the campus. This expansion provides an opportunity for Carson to capitalize on this growth by providing housing, retail, restaurants, a grocery store and other desirable uses near the campus. A higher education institute also provides opportunities for collaboration with employers and can foster new businesses. There is currently a dispute between the City and the University over the environmental impacts of the proposed development on the campus,

how to mitigate the impacts, and the City's request to be the lead agency for the project. The City may wish to plan for a "University District" that addresses how to capitalize on the university's plans.

- **Changing demographics may result in new land use demands.**

Carson's population is projected to grow by 16 percent between 2015 and 2040. The General Plan should consider providing sufficient housing, jobs, schools, and amenities to meet the needs of an increased population. More residents will also put a strain on existing infrastructure, including roads, public transit, parks, and utilities. Additionally, between 2010 to 2015, Carson's senior population has grown and the number of children and young adults has decreased. An older population may require affordable housing or assisted living, handicap accessible facilities, or medical offices.

- **The Planning Area has a higher median household income and fewer people living in poverty compared to Los Angeles County.**

Generally, Carson's households have higher incomes than many places in Los Angeles County. This could be due to the availability of jobs both in the Planning Area and surrounding cities or the higher household size within the city, assuming that multiple household members are employed. Higher incomes mean that Carson may be able to increase spending within its commercial areas if it can meet the needs of local residents.

- **Promote workforce opportunities through land use decisions.**

Unemployment in Carson has decreased from 15.8 percent in 2010 to 6.3 percent in 2017. The majority of jobs within the Planning Area are in manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and trade, which have experienced job losses in recent years that are projected to continue through 2040. Additionally, the city currently experiences a job surplus compared to its employed population. The number of jobs within Carson is projected to increase by 24 percent between 2015 and 2040, which will further increase its job surplus. The General Plan may address attracting jobs in the health and education fields, which are major employers of Carson residents and predicted to have the largest growth between now and 2040.

CIRCULATION

- **The General Plan update process is an opportunity for the City to identify strategic long-term improvements to its roadway network.**

As of 2017, the City plans to improve the roadway network by repaving roads, introducing a Rapid Bus Priority System, planting trees, and widening roads, but budgetary restraints limit the amount of improvements that can be made in the short-term. Because the General Plan will set a vision for the City through 2040, the City may consider identifying long-term strategies and priorities for transportation network improvements in the General Plan.

- **Carson has 13.3 miles of bicycle lanes and seeks to significantly expand the breadth of this network.**

There are a few existing bike lanes in the city. However, a wide-ranging bicycle network with several bicycle facility types is proposed in the Master Plan of Bikeways (2013), including Class I bike paths along the entire extent of Dominguez Channel, as well as in other locations. The City should consider adopting General Plan policies that will support the extension of this bicycle network. Supporting the extension of this network may encourage alternative modes of transportation and active lifestyles.

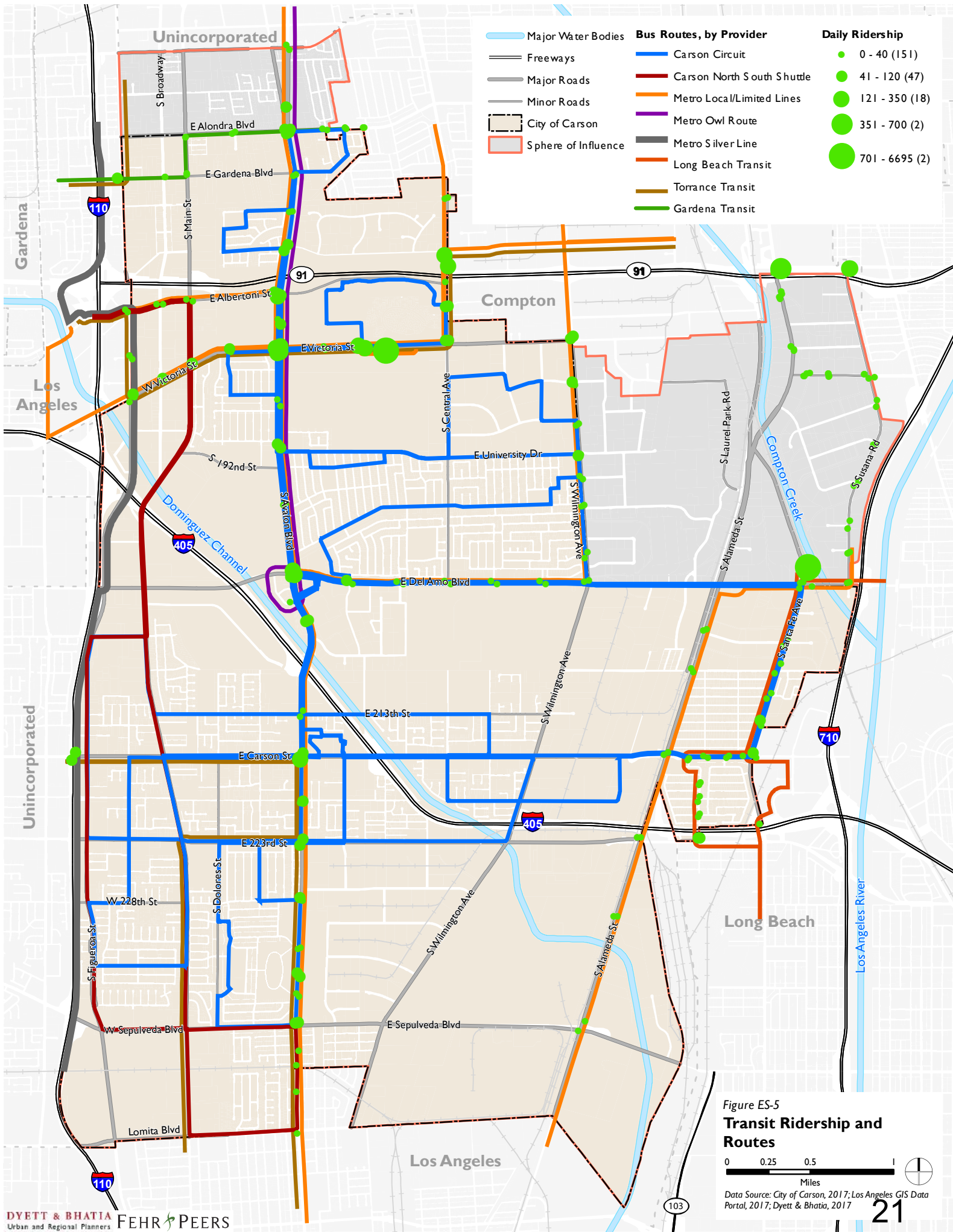
- **Carson does not enjoy a comprehensive local or regional transportation system.**

Carson lacks sufficient access to high quality regional mass transit. The Del Amo Blue line station is outside the eastern edge of the City, away from residential uses. Planning work continues on the extension of the Green Line from its current terminus at Redondo Beach Station to a new transit center in Torrance. However, there are no other extensions planned through Carson to connect to significant regional attractions such as the StubHub Center and the upcoming Fashion Outlets Los Angeles. The City should play a more active role in connecting the extension of the Green Line from Torrance to the Blue Line east of the city.

More localized transit service is provided by several agencies that lack comprehensive coordination. The Carson Circuit routes are currently under evaluation by the City. The SouthBay Pavilion Transit Center, located in the center of Carson, acts as the hub for the Carson Circuit and other transit providers that serve the city. However, this “Transit Center” is merely a bus stop along the road. Carson lacks a true Transit Center. The City should ensure residents are provided with reliable and convenient access to transportation.

- **With a large share of the land in the Planning Area devoted to industrial uses, main corridors in the city are frequently used to transport goods.**

The impact of goods movement on streets is of particular concern to the City, and resulted in the City Council passing a temporary moratorium on industrial and warehouse facilities in 2017. Heavy truck traffic creates wear and tear on roadways, impacting the experiences of people who also use these roads to drive or travel via bicycle. As part of this General Plan update, the City may consider reevaluating truck routes to reduce damage to roads, adjusting the funding mechanisms used to pay for road upkeep, or some other alternative.



ENVIRONMENTAL CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- **Due to its location within the South Coast Air Basin, proximity to major roadways, and prevalence of heavy industry Carson is in non-attainment status for several air quality attainment standards.**

Despite having significant stationary sources of air pollution, Carson lacks an AQMD air monitoring station within City Limits. This alone raises significant environmental justice issues. According to 2012 through 2016 monitoring data for the South Los Angeles County Coastal area, in which the city is located, the area exceeded the State 8-hour ozone standard in 2014, the State 24-hour PM10 standard in 2016, and the State 24-hour PM2.5 standard in 2012. In addition, due to emissions from diesel engines, mobile sources, and stationary sources, the estimated cancer risk in Carson is between 1,100 to 1,400 cancers per million. When considering future land use planning, the City should focus on compatibility of industrial and residential uses in order to reduce residential exposure to mobile- and stationary- source emissions associated with highways and industrial uses. In addition, the City should work with transportation authorities to encourage alternatives to automobile travel to reduce harmful emissions.

- **Pollutants of concern are present in Carson's surface waters, due to contaminated runoff. Water quality should be improved, and future pollution prevented.**

The City should work with minimize the threat to water and groundwater quality through strict enforcement of rules and regulations and remediate existing surface water quality issues. Additionally, hydrology impacts should be minimized through identification of flood zones and management of drainage patterns to control surface runoff and erosion.

- **Several known cultural resources have been identified with the city that should be preserved and it is possible that additional resources exist but have yet to be uncovered.**

Several known cultural resources have been identified within the city and there is potential to encounter previously unknown resources as future development projects are initiated. Moreover, excavations associated with construction projects have the potential to encounter buried archaeological and paleontological resources, even where prior development activities have occurred.

- **Environmental hazards are present throughout the Planning Area, including storage and transportation of hazardous materials, that should be mitigated in order to prevent fires, exposure to toxic chemicals, and pollution due to the transportation of hazardous materials.**

Minimize the threat to public health and safety and the environment through strict enforcement of rules and regulations and by working closely with first responders. Minimize the threat of a release of hazardous materials through strict enforcement of rules and regulations, monitoring business operations which handle hazardous materials through the permitting process, and identifying emergency procedures and evacuation routes.

- **Future development should adhere to the policies laid out in the City's Climate Action Plan.**

Carson adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2017 that outlines policies and actions to reduce the City's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. New development should adhere to relevant policies in the CAP and employ sustainable building and planning strategies, when possible, to minimize GHG emissions.

- **Due to the presence of active faults in close proximity to the Planning Area, residents and structures within the City of Carson require protection from geological hazards.**

Damage from geologic hazards can be mitigated and prevented through strict enforcement of rules and regulations, specifically designing structures to the current seismic design standards. Additionally, it is important to ensure that erosion is controlled through drainage and grading plans and that all geotechnical design requirements for projects are adhered to.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- **The City is short of meeting its park service goal (4.0 acres per 1,000 residents), and should either consider lowering this service goal or adding park space to attain this goal.**

As of 2017, Carson's parks service ratio is about 3.6, which is similar to what it was in 2004 when the General Plan was last updated. Though the City is short of reaching its park service goal, it does not plan to increase park acreage, and instead seeks to improve existing park space. Per Chapter 4, SCAG (Southern California Association of Governments) projects the population of Carson to increase to 107,900 residents by 2040 from 93,700 in 2017. If no additional parks are planned, the City will continue to fall short of meeting its parks service goal. Because the City currently prioritizes park improvements rather than park expansion, the City should consider whether meeting the service ratio should continue to be a priority through the General Plan horizon year. The City may consider lowering its park service goal to a more attainable figure, or building additional park space to make progress towards achieving its current goal.

- **Parks, recreational facilities, and community facilities should reflect the needs of a growing and changing population.**

The City should continually assess whether existing parks, recreational facilities, and community facilities suit resident needs as demographics and community priorities change over time. For instance, a large senior population would indicate a need for accessible facilities and programming that appeals to seniors. A predominance of young families may suggest a need for child care facilities. In addition, the City should engage with youth to make sure parks and recreational facilities contain sports fields and other spaces of interest to young people.

- **Enrollment is decreasing in Carson schools while the population of the community is growing.**

While schools within the Planning Area are currently under their enrollment capacity, in the future they must have sufficient space to meet the demands of Carson's projected population growth. To do so, the City of Carson must maintain a close working relationship with the LAUSD to monitor student population growth. With a minority of Carson residents enrolled in Planning Area schools, accommodating future growth will not only have to consider the population within Carson, but also surrounding cities.

- **Major opportunity sites can be developed as new parks and community facilities.**

Some of the vacant and underutilized sites identified in Chapter 2 can be redeveloped as parks, open spaces, recreational areas, or community facilities. In addition, the right-of-way along the Dominguez Channel can potentially become a transportation corridor for pedestrians and bicyclists. Furthermore, there are several existing community facilities that can be redeveloped to better serve the future population. For instance, the Victoria Golf Course has the potential to be redeveloped into a new public park or recreational facility. Carson City Hall and the Carson Event Center can also potentially be redeveloped to suit the needs of the growing population.

- **The City has the opportunity to incorporate sustainable measures in its parks, recreational facilities, and community facilities that will reduce waste and negative environmental impacts.**

Though the City has measures in its Municipal Code that promote sustainability, more can be done to reduce Carson's impact on the environment. Encouragement and expansion of compost receptacles could be evaluated as a potential strategy to reduce solid waste going to landfill and community greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficient lighting at parks and community facilities; solar panels on top of bus shelters, community facilities, and recreational facilities; and expanded use of drought-tolerant landscaping at public parks could make Carson a greener community.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

- **Carson's industrial history has led to public health and environmental justice challenges. The city must prioritize minimizing existing exposure and clean industrial growth in the future.**

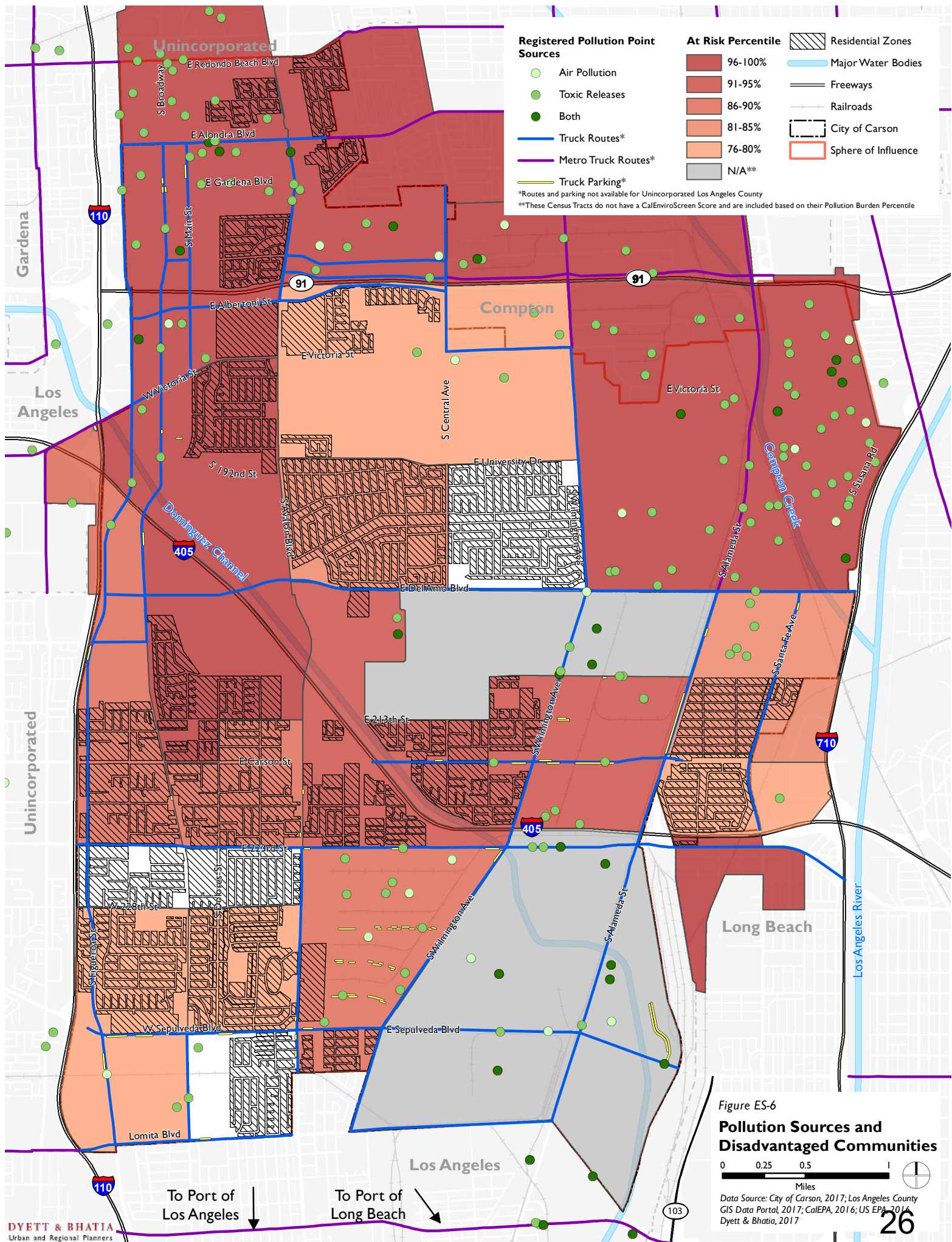
Local industry, manufacturing, and refineries, as well as trucks going through Carson to the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach contribute to air pollution that can compromise the health of its residents. The industrial economy is a cornerstone of Carson's land use and history and the General Plan should address how it can continue in a way that decreases health impacts. Some options to consider include mitigation and clean-up measures, buffers between industrial and residential areas, and encouraging cleaner technologies and modern facilities that minimize emissions. Carson should pursue programs to monitor air pollution in real time. Carson should also consider obtaining assistance with public health programs.

- **Existing land use patterns include industrial uses adjacent to residential neighborhoods and mobile home parks.**

The updated General Plan should address strategies for decreasing the impact of industrial uses on residential ones, such as planting street trees or limiting truck traffic in or near residential neighborhoods. Additionally, new residential development should be located farther away from industrial uses and vice versa.

- **How can residents' access to parkland be improved?**

Carson's residents are under-served by parkland compared to the city's 2004 General Plan goals. Furthermore, there are several neighborhoods within the city without easy access to parks and open space. Adequate amount of and access to parkland and recreational opportunities, designed and configured to match population needs, can promote active living, reduce obesity, and improve mental health. Green space can also help to filter the air and sequester carbon. Since the city has no current plans to develop new parks, proposed development projects within the Planning Area may include publicly-accessible park, recreation, and open spaces, especially in areas that are not within walking distance to an existing park.



- **Carson has the opportunity to create an urban environment that is walkable and well-served by public transit.**

Currently, most of Carson is within walking distance to transit, which improves access to schools, parks, retail areas, and more. As new, denser development continues, and Carson's population grows, maintaining walkability and access to, as well as service levels of, transit is key. One area where Carson is currently lacking citywide access is neighborhood retail, especially grocery stores. Neighborhoods in the eastern portion of the Planning Area are mostly served by neighborhood markets and lack a full-service grocery store, while the northern part of the Planning Area, including the CSU Dominguez Hills area, lacks both. Attracting grocery stores, neighborhood markets, and other types of neighborhood-serving retail to new developments can increase walkability and accessibility, improving public health.

- **As land and housing values continue to increase, how can Carson maintain its diversity and prevent displacement of lower income populations?**

While more affordable than the county, home prices have increased by 31 percent since 2000 and more than 50 percent of renters are considered rent-burdened according to the percent of gross income they pay towards rent. Most affordable housing planned in either under construction or approved new developments is designated for seniors, artists, or veterans. Affordable rental and owner-occupied housing for all types of lower income families and individuals should also be considered.

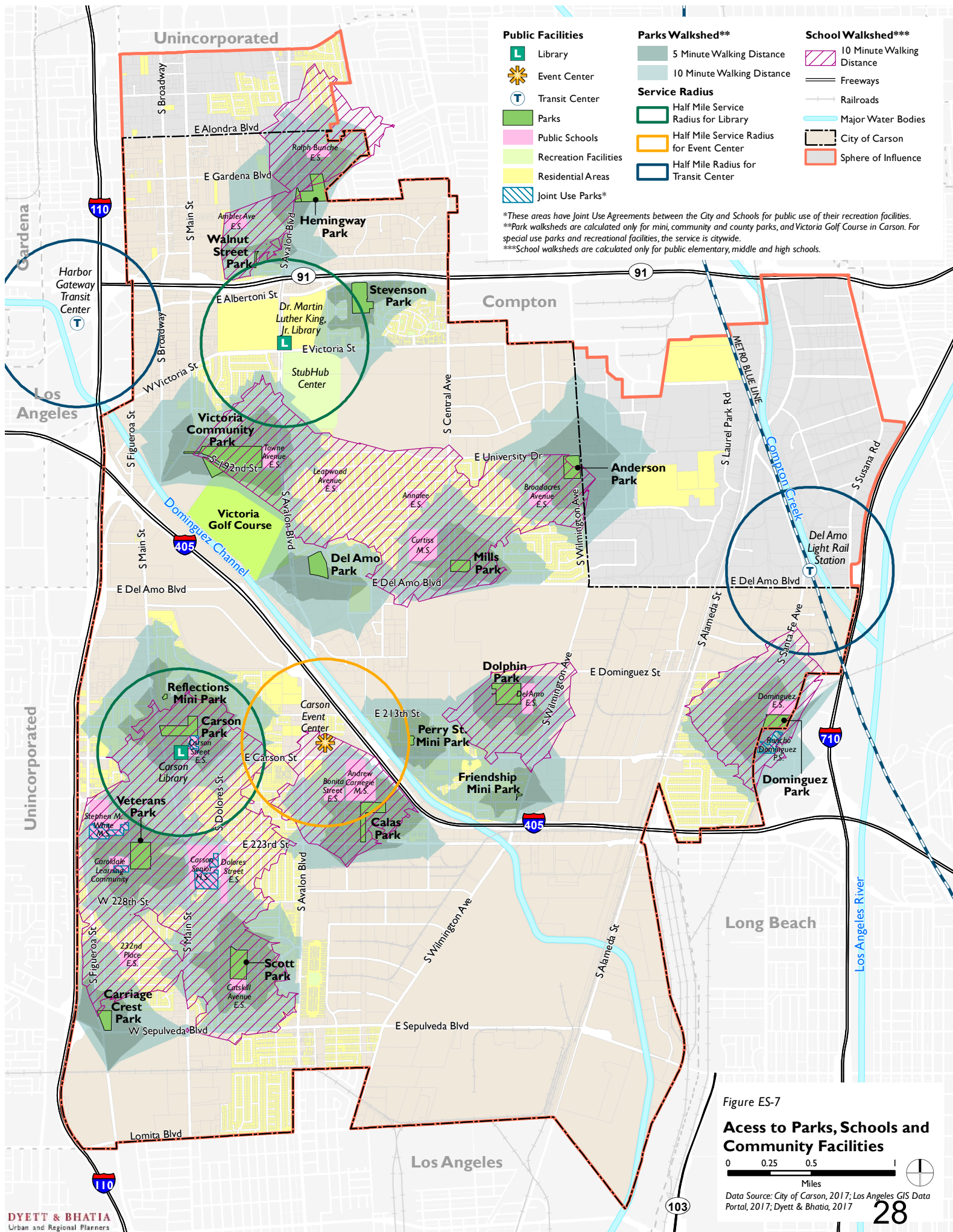


Figure ES-7

Access to Parks, Schools and Community Facilities

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data Source: City of Carson, 2017; Los Angeles GIS Data Portal, 2017; Dyett & Bhatia, 2017

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