



3. CONTEXT AND CONDITIONS

3.1 EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

3.1.1 Property Configuration and Existing Uses

The Artesia Corridor Specific Plan project site is currently divided into 21 parcels, ranging in size from 0.2 acres to 7.3 acres. The majority of parcels are owned by separate individuals, with a small number owned by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District or the Union Pacific Railway. Some of the properties are landlocked and must obtain access to Artesia Boulevard through access easements. As of 2006, the site contained commercial, industrial, and residential uses, including such uses as a gas station, hotel, market, restaurant, auto service center, garment factory, and residential homes. Six parcels are completely or partially vacant or unoccupied. A map of the existing parcels and uses is provided in Figure 3.1a.

3.1.2 Circulation

The major freeways that provide regional access to the project site include I-405 to the north, and I-110 and SR-91 to the east. Circulation along I-405 connects to the project via Western and Normandie Avenue, which run along the eastern and western edges of the project boundary respectively. Circulation along I-110 reaches the project via SR-91, which transitions into Artesia Boulevard at that intersection and runs along the northern boundary of the site.

The three major streets bordering the project, Western Avenue, Normandie Avenue, and Artesia Boulevard, provide local access to the site. Artesia Boulevard is a major divided arterial, with a total of six lanes traversing along the northern edge of the site. Western Avenue is a minor arterial with four lanes of travel, and runs along the western boundary of the project. Normandie Avenue is a collector street, with a total of four lanes of travel, and runs adjacent to the Union Pacific Railway tracks along the eastern edge of the site.

3.1.3 Topography and Hydrology

The topography of the project site is generally level, with areas that are gently to moderately sloping. Artificial fill soils cover most of the site and are thickest near the center of the site where the Dominguez Creek was infilled, and at the eastern end of the site where a sump was excavated and filled. The site is located in the Coastal Plain West Coast groundwater basin and, based on well records at the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, depth to groundwater is approximately 85 feet below ground surface. However, groundwater was encountered at depths ranging from 20 to 24 feet below ground surface during a site investigation undertaken in support of the Project's EIR in November 2005. The direction of groundwater flow is generally to the west-southwest.

3.1.4 Geology and Soils

As are all of the jurisdictions within southern California, the City of Gardena is located within a seismically active region that includes numerous active, potentially active, and inactive fault traces and, consequently, is subject to the risks and hazards associated with potentially destructive earthquakes. The area located along Artesia Boulevard and the Dominguez Flood Control Channel in the southern portion of the City is located within a liquefaction zone. Liquefaction is caused by a shock or strain from an earthquake, and involves the sudden loss of soil strength and cohesion and the temporary transformation of soil into a fluid mass. Therefore, older structures within the liquefaction areas of the City that were not constructed or reinforced to meet earthquake standards are vulnerable to structural damage.



Existing Uses (as of 5/2006)

Existing Parcel Boundaries

1	Chevron (0.7 ac)	9	Farwest Corrosion (2.1 ac)	17	Union Pacific Railway (0.2 ac)
2	Dynasty Hotel (0.4 ac)	10	U-Haul (2.5 ac)	18	Union Pacific Railway (0.9 ac)
3	Wendy's (0.8 ac)	11	House (0.2 ac)	19	Vacant/Dominguez Channel (3.3 ac)
4	Marukai (4.6 ac)	12	House (0.2 ac)	20	Dominguez Channel (2.4 ac)
5	Apollo Embroidery (4.2 ac)	13	Vacant (0.2 ac)	21	Dominguez Channel (3.9 ac)
6	Gardena Auto Center (3.4 ac)	14	House (0.2 ac)		
7	Vacant (7.3 ac)	15	Vacant (5.9 ac)		
8	Golden State Alliance (1.2 ac)	16	Vacant (<0.1 ac)		

source: The Planning Center, 2006



Figure 3.1a Existing Uses



The project site contains portions of the liquefaction zone described above. The project site is underlain by artificial fill soils over most of the site, with younger alluvium and older alluvium beneath the artificial fill soils. The alluvial soils predominately consist of fine-grained soils, with occasional layers of clayey sand and silty sand.

3.1.5 Biological Resources

The City of Gardena is a fully developed community with less than 2 percent of vacant land. The City does include one biological resource of importance, the Willows Wetland. The Willows Wetland is located north of the commercial development at the northwest corner of Artesia Boulevard and Vermont Avenue, approximately 0.25 mile east of the project site. The Willows Wetland is the last approximately eight acres left of a larger lake that once occupied the area, and is home to two sensitive species, the redshouldered hawk and the yellow warbler. Except for the Willows Wetland, the City contains no rare, threatened, or endangered species, nor any special-status plant and animal species. Wildlife present in the City consists of those known to coexist in areas of human habitation (i.e., mammals, birds and reptiles).

The project site is developed with commercial, industrial, and one existing residential use. Neither rare, threatened, or endangered species, nor any special-status plant or animal species are present on the project site. No riparian habitats, sensitive biological communities or wetlands are present on the project site.

3.2 GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING DESIGNATIONS

The City of Gardena recently updated its General Plan (April 2006). The General Plan Land Use Plan designates the project site as General Commercial, with a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.5. The General Commercial land use designation provides for a wide range of larger scale commercial uses to serve both the needs of the City and the region. It is intended for commercial uses such as regional retail, automobile dealerships, supermarkets, junior department stores, financial centers, professional offices, restaurants, and other commercial uses oriented to the traveling public. The corresponding zoning designation is General Commercial. The 2006 General Plan, Land Use Policy 3.3, which states:

“Consider the adoption of specific plans for the four corners at Van Ness-Rosecrans, Western-Rosecrans, Rosecrans-Normandie centers and the Artesia corridor to promote and direct revitalization efforts, and to further study and evaluate whether a mix of commercial and residential development is appropriate in these areas.”

With the adoption of the General Plan, the site's existing industrial and low density residential uses are considered legal nonconforming uses. This means that the uses would be allowed to remain, but would be limited with regard to expansion and remodeling opportunities to only those efforts required for public health and safety.

A zone change is submitted as part of the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan. The change requested is from General Commercial (C-3) and General Industrial (M-2) to Artesia Corridor Specific Plan. This change would support the Commercial and Mixed-Use land use categories proposed as part of the Specific Plan and would be supportive of the City's General Plan policy allowing the development of residential uses within the Specific Plan area.

3.3 OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

A variety of factors must be considered to maximize the development potential of the project. The significant opportunities and constraints that affect the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan relate to the



regional context and location of the project, as well as the site's direct relationship to the adjacent uses, surrounding streets, the channel to the south, and the railroad easement along the eastern edge. Additional issues include the appropriate amount and type of commercial and residential development, the number of property owners on the site, existing circulation patterns, and environmental issues.

3.3.1 Site Accessibility

The project is located adjacent to the City's southern border, in close proximity to the Harbor Freeway (I-110), San Diego Freeway (I-405), and Artesia Freeway (SR-91). The project area benefits from significant exposure to Artesia Boulevard, including two prominent corners at the intersection of Artesia Boulevard and Western and Normandie Avenues. The Specific Plan intends to take advantage of the area's location and exposure by establishing a welcoming gateway to the community on the project site. The gateway will be characterized with distinct signage, architecture, and landscaping to enhance the look and feel of the public right-of-way.



The railroad adjacent to Normandie Avenue requires a compatible land use for that edge of the project area. With the noise from the railroad, and also the vantage point from the intersection, this corner is best suited for commercial uses. However, in providing a minor access point off of Normandie, consideration must be given to the difference in grades when crossing the railroad.

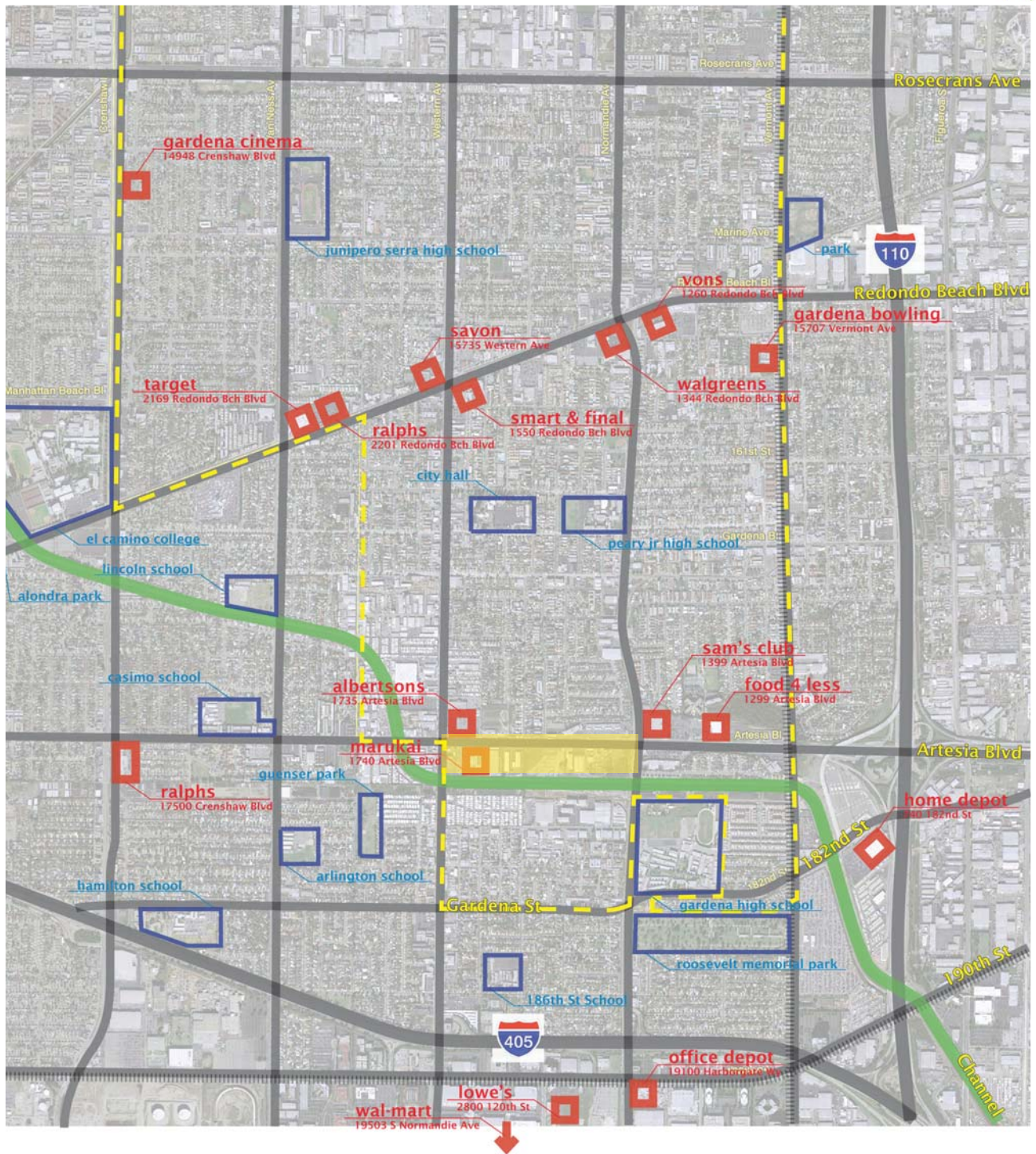
Turning back to Artesia Boulevard, the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan can recognize the advantage of bordering this major street by using gateway signage to attract drivers to the area. Since the

project site lies at the southerly edge of Gardena, the opportunity arises for the project to serve as a gateway to the City. This increases the importance of this stretch of Artesia Boulevard to passing cars, promoting the site as a special place and elevating the image of Gardena.

3.3.2 Land Use

The Specific Plan aims to identify the most appropriate mix of land uses to create a unique, high quality place with successful retail and residential components. A focused retail analysis prepared for the Artesia Corridor site supports a strong potential for commercial development. This, along with the demand for residential, calls for flexibility in accommodating market demands for both commercial and residential uses at this location. The strategic integration and positioning of these different uses contribute to the establishment of a unique destination for residents and visitors.

The retail analysis prepared for the project examined the regional and local context, along with demographics and retail patterns, to determine the commercial potential for the site. The regional context revealed an abundance of significant large retailers and small merchants in the market area. The project area is surrounded by several major retailers located within a mile of the site that have taken advantage of the major corridor frontage opportunities available along nearby arterials. Retailers such as Target, Ralphs, Smart & Final, Vons, Walgreens, Albertsons, Sam's Club and Food for Less are all located within a mile of the project site, making it critical to find the appropriate mix of retailers that can successfully compete for business within the community and will ultimately contribute to a development that can be sustained over a long period of time.



Regional Opportunities & Constraints

- Artesia Specific Plan project area
- Gardena City Boundary
- Significant Retail Locations
- School & Park Locations
- Major Roads
- Channel

source: The Planning Center

Figure 3.3a Regional Opportunities and Constraints



The current lack of medium-sized retailers uncovers the potential for retail tenants ranging in size from approximately 25,000 to 80,000 square feet, as prime candidates for the site. Further analysis identified as possible future tenants specific tenant categories and merchants that currently do not operate stores within the vicinity of the project, summarized below:

<u>Tenant Category:</u>	<u>Example Tenant:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General Merchandise• Discount Apparel• Fitness Center• Arts & Crafts• Office Supplies• Pets	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kohl's• T.J. Maxx and/or Old Navy• LA Fitness and/or Bally's Total Fitness• JoAnn's• Office Max• PetsMart

The retail analysis and comments from the public during outreach efforts also indicated a desire for quality sit-down restaurants. Additional elements of the site identified as positive attractors for future retail merchants include visibility along major traffic corridors, synergy with adjacent retailers, adequate developable area for larger retailers, and spacing from existing stores. Site plan design that provides for suitable access points and efficient internal circulation also add to the commercial potential. The market analysis estimates that the Artesia Corridor Specific Plan has the ability to develop at least 300,000 to 350,000 square feet of general commercial and restaurant uses.

The central portion of the site only has frontage to Artesia Boulevard on one side, decreasing the land's value for retailers because of this midblock status. This area may hold a higher potential for residential land uses. The introduction of residential could stimulate further development, appeal to existing residents looking for "move-up" housing within the City, and attract young professionals looking for high quality homes in a mixed-use environment.

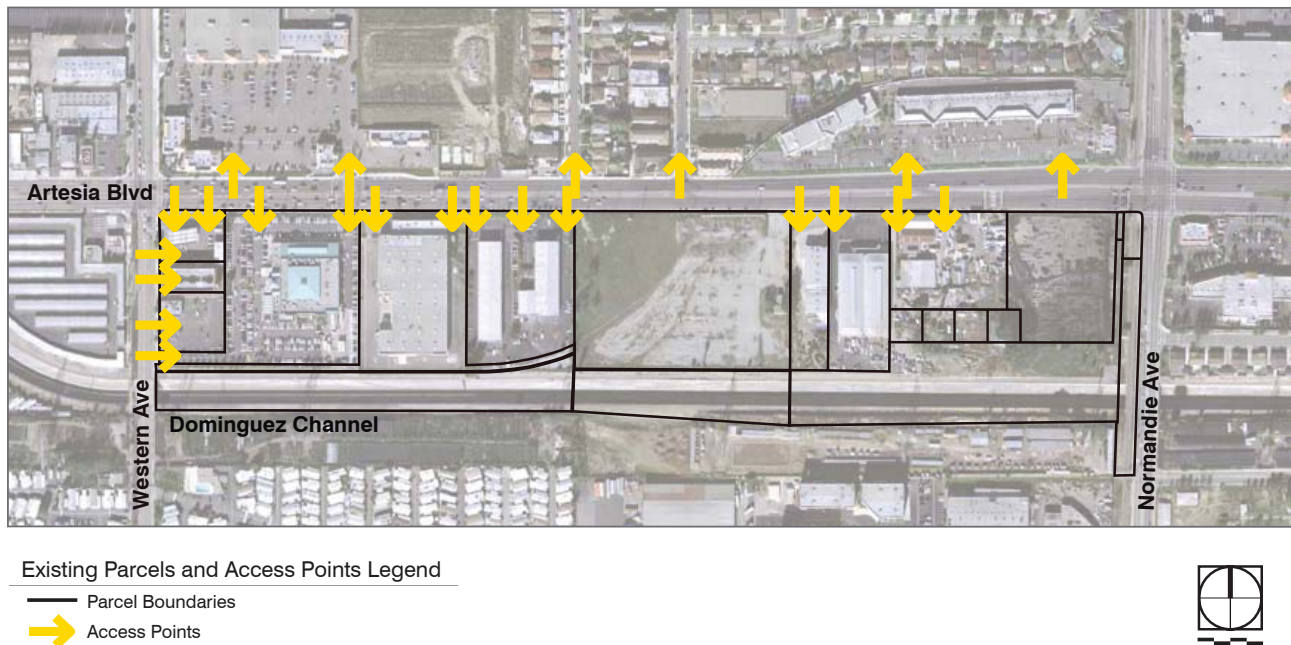
The market research analysis identified a lack of distinctive commercial areas within the City of Gardena. The strategic integration of commercial and residential uses within a site plan that emphasizes the pedestrian lends itself to creation of a unique place that attracts and encourages people to gather and shop. The coordination of these land uses enables the project to take full advantage of the site potential.

3.3.3 Property Ownership

The existing site is comprised of multiple properties owned by several individual parties. One of the concerns in creating a cohesive plan for the site is to recognize these different parcels and find a way to bring them together in a plan that is mutually beneficial to all property owners. The incremental development of individual properties without a unified vision may fail to realize the full potential of the site.

The Specific Plan aims to replace the previous patchwork of development with a cohesive, complementary mix of uses guided by a comprehensive set of circulation and infrastructure systems. The Specific Plan will facilitate lot consolidation to prevent piecemeal development, and redevelop the site as a unified whole to increase property values.

Phasing will also be important to accommodate existing land uses while allowing for other parts of the site to grow and develop in an organized manner.



source: The Planning Center

Figure 3.3b Existing Parcels and Access Points

3.3.4 Circulation

The site is located along a major traffic corridor, as Artesia Boulevard transitions to the Artesia Freeway (SR-91). Additionally, the site can be easily accessible from the 405 and 110 freeways. The site is bounded on three sides by major streets, Western Avenue, Artesia Boulevard, and Normandie Avenue, all experiencing high volumes of traffic. The high volumes of traffic offer a draw for quality commercial uses seeking significant exposure and access. The full commercial potential of the site, however, is limited by the current circulation pattern, in which each business interacts separately with Artesia Boulevard and takes access through one or more driveways.

Even with over one-third of the project site currently vacant, there are currently 17 total access points to the project site, 13 of which are located along the southern side of Artesia Boulevard. Only one access point off of Artesia Boulevard is a signalized intersection. Each one of the unsignalized driveways can act as a point of conflict, as traffic must slow down along Artesia Boulevard to allow vehicles to enter or exit the project site. Additionally, internal access opportunities are unavailable, so travelling from one property to another requires vehicles to re-enter Artesia Boulevard, creating additional traffic and congestion. With one cohesive plan for the Artesia Corridor project, an organized internal circulation system will minimize access points intersecting Artesia Boulevard, creating more efficient traffic patterns for both Artesia Boulevard and the site and enhancing the project's commercial potential. It will also create more pedestrian friendly spaces that are protected from the high volumes of traffic that are carried on the surrounding arterial streets.

3.3.5 Environmental Issues

One of the more important environmental constraints on the site is the contamination of the parcel adjacent to the railroad along Normandie Avenue. Referred to as the Gardena Sumps, these sumps were dumping grounds for waste oil sludge, rinse water, acids, and tank bottom sludge in the 1940s. Fortunately, the contamination left by the oil waste had limited migration into the soil, and groundwater has not been significantly impacted. Partially as a result of this contamination, the Gardena Sumps site



has sat undeveloped for a number of years, despite its prime corner location. The Specific Plan intends to stimulate development around the Sumps to increase property values and development potential to the point where remediating the site (as necessary) is financially feasible.

Prior to any development of the site, mitigation measures must be developed to minimize the potential impacts of the contamination. Depending on the time frame for the cleanup of the site, the development of this part of the plan may still be delayed for a number of years, which will affect the phasing of development within the Specific Plan site.