

# INDUSTRIAL ELEMENT

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## PRIMARY GOAL

To provide opportunities for well-designed research and development, business park, traditional industrial, and “heavy” commercial uses in the community which include employee amenities to enhance the viability and image of Kearny Mesa.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

Kearny Mesa has evolved into a regional employment center with an array of industrial and commercial uses ranging from small, locally based incubator businesses to large well-established defense contractors. Uses in Kearny Mesa which are discussed in this element can be categorized as either 1) general or “traditional” industrial; 2) business park; 3) scientific research and development; or 4) “heavy” commercial. These categories are discussed below in greater detail.

### **General Industrial**

General industrial uses are those engaged in manufacturing, assembling, processing, warehousing or in transporting goods or products. These general industrial uses can be further differentiated on the basis of size and location. Development in western Kearny Mesa (west of SR-163) is a function of the original small lot subdivision pattern. Many of the lots are the minimum 15,000 square feet in area. Small lots accommodate incubator businesses and other firms that do not have extensive space needs. Industrial development in western Kearny Mesa is typified by small manufacturers, warehouse and distribution facilities, and service uses. Without proper controls, small lots intended for industrial development can be developed with commercial uses. Western Kearny Mesa's mixed industrial-commercial land use pattern can be directly attributed to the small lot subdivisions that have occurred, and the M-1A and M-1B industrial zones which permit a range of commercial and industrial uses.

Eastern Kearny Mesa's development pattern is the result of several events that occurred in the early 1950s. The City of San Diego acquired Gibbs Field (later to become Montgomery Field) and the surrounding lands for a metropolitan airport. When airspace conflicts with NAS Miramar preempted the metropolitan airport, Montgomery Field became a general aviation airfield and the 1,000 acres of surplus airport land became industrial and research parks. In 1955, the Convair Astronautics Division of General Dynamics was the first of numerous aerospace and electronic firms to locate in the industrial park.

These corporate industrial users required large industrially zoned parcels to carry out their operations. The large lot, industrial land use pattern that was established by these first industrial firms is still evident today in portions of Kearny Mesa.

## **Business Park**

Business Park development is a combination of industrial, warehousing and distribution, office, and limited local-serving retail uses. The percentage of each use varies, though any retail use is always clearly accessory. Industrial uses are predominant in business parks located west of SR-163, while business parks in eastern Kearny Mesa emphasize office uses.

The physical form of business parks typically consists of one- to two-story buildings, usually designed in a manner which permits office uses to be located in the front with industrial uses in the back. Alternatively, the building design may permit industrial uses on the ground floor and offices above.

Older business park developments lack the urban design amenities required of new business park developments. The business parks in eastern Kearny Mesa and the recent developments in western Kearny Mesa reflect higher development standards than the previous generation of business parks. Current standards have upgraded the requirements for landscaping, signage and the screening of service areas.

## **Scientific Research and Development**

Scientific research uses are those engaged in research and development that require advanced technology and skills. This includes firms engaged in product development for aerospace or computer applications, laboratories and testing facilities, and other research activities. Scientific research firms are generally located in southeastern Kearny Mesa. These research firms, together with the corporate industrial uses engaged in research, currently constitute 25 percent of San Diego County's research and development market according to the San Diego Economic Development Corporation (EDC) *Guide to Industrial/R&D Space 1988-89*, San Diego County.

The physical form of R&D uses consists of one- to three-story buildings. Due to the increasing number of computers in the work place, a recent trend in the design of R&D is to create a more compact and intensive use of space rather than laboratory or large testing areas. This may result in three-story facilities that are similar to garden office buildings instead of traditional buildings that typically include truck dock facilities and large bay doors.

## **Heavy Commercial**

Heavy commercial uses are those that are not commonly found in shopping centers due to the large amount of space needed to house the merchandise being sold. Examples of heavy commercial uses include lumberyards, swimming pool suppliers and automobile sales companies.

## ISSUES

### **Land Use/Zoning**

A primary land use issue in Kearny Mesa has been the erosion of the industrial base due to competitive industrial land alternatives in other areas of the City, and the development of non-industrial uses on industrially designated land, particularly multi-tenant office and retail uses, which generate higher traffic counts. The office and retail development of industrially designated properties has occurred largely because of the wide range of uses permitted by the M-1A and M-1B zones.

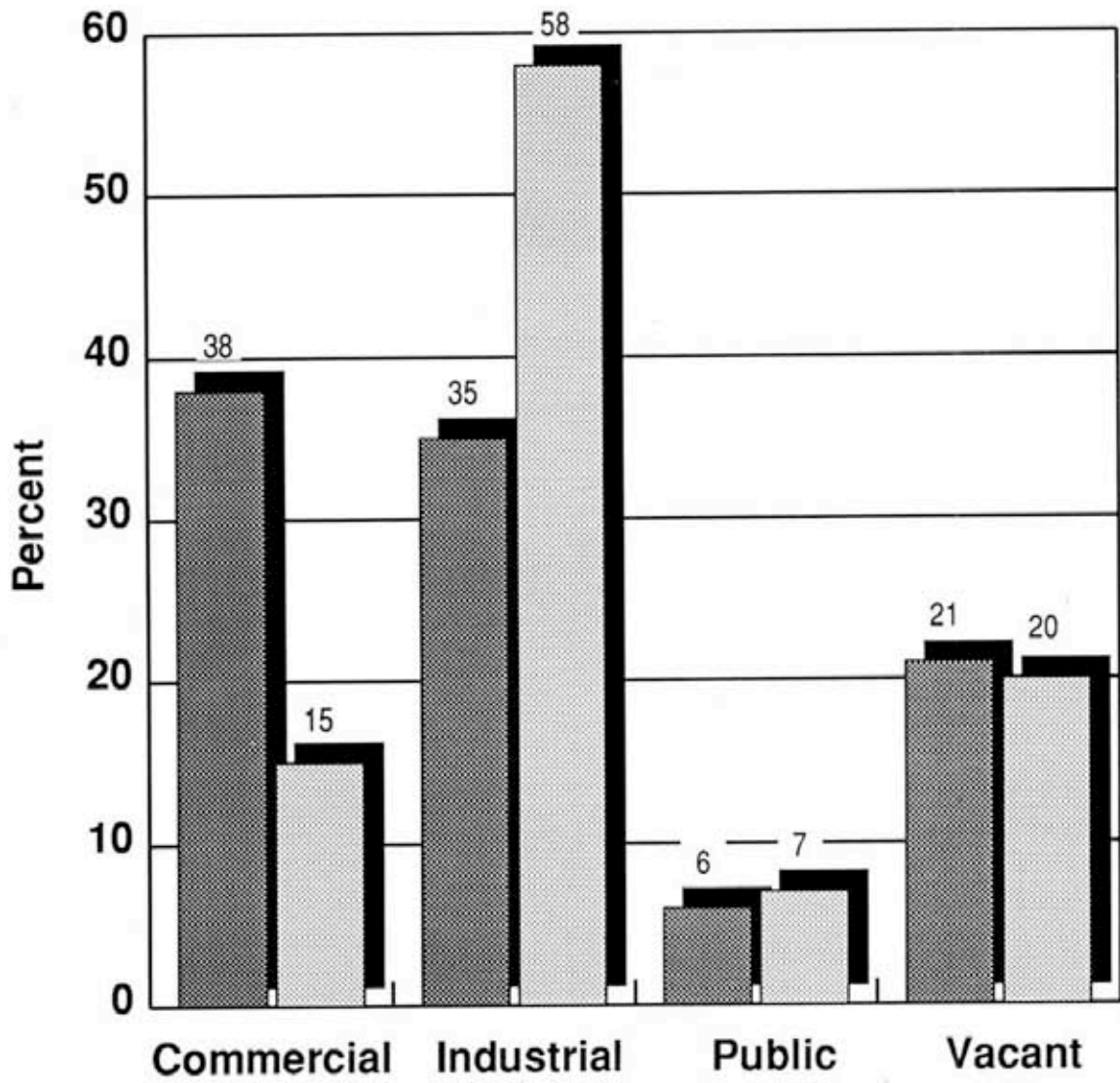
Most of Kearny Mesa is zoned M-1A and M-1B (see **Figures 5 & 6**). These industrial zones were designed to permit a broad range of accessory uses to complement the industrial uses. However, because these zones allow a wide variety of uses, a significant amount of property has developed into commercial and office uses. The M-1A zone was originally intended to be a light industrial zone that also permitted a full range of commercial uses in support of the industrial uses. The M-1B zone was designed to be a light industrial zone with supportive office uses.

The attributes that make Kearny Mesa a desirable location for industrial development are likewise attractive for commercial development. The central location, freeway accessibility, and relative proximity to residential areas are qualities equally sought by industrial and commercial developers, including developers of office buildings. Without a means of preserving the integrity of the industrially designated lands, industrial uses compete with commercial enterprises for available properties. The subsequent increase in land prices quickly escalates beyond what industrial uses can afford, resulting in the erosion of industrial land. A result of this commercial intrusion is traffic congestion, a troublesome by-product created by the increased traffic volumes associated with commercial uses.

Another land use issue is the compatibility of development with the Montgomery Field Municipal Airport and the Miramar Naval Air Station. Proposed developments should be reviewed for noise and land use compatibility. This is particularly important for properties within the Flight Activity Zone (FAZ) of Montgomery Field.

### **Traffic**

Traffic volumes on the primary arterial and major streets within Kearny Mesa vary considerably. Aero Drive, Balboa Avenue, Clairemont Mesa Boulevard and Convoy Street experience peak hour congestion along portions which can be attributed to the very high employment level in Kearny Mesa. Future development and redevelopment in Kearny Mesa will continue to impact the circulation system.



**Existing Land Use Per Zone (1992)**

Kearny Mesa Community Plan

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FIGURE

## **Urban Design**

Kearny Mesa's built environment is also a product of the unrestrictive nature of the M-1A and M-1B zones. The development regulations of these zones have not emphasized design features. Two urban design components that should be upgraded in Kearny Mesa are landscaping and signage control.

### **Landscaping**

Prior to the adoption of the citywide landscaping ordinance, only minimal landscaping was required in the M-1A and M-1B zones. Landscaping typically consisted of a landscaped strip adjacent to the street. The present citywide ordinance not only requires more landscaping but, more importantly, a comprehensive plan that integrates landscaping with the overall site design. The enhanced landscape ordinance will significantly improve the individual projects now subject to its regulations, but unfortunately will have little effect on existing properties that do not redevelop.

In contrast to older developments in western Kearny Mesa, the M-1B zoned, contemporary developments along Ruffin Road in eastern Kearny Mesa present well-landscaped sites. The M-IP zoned properties on the south side of Aero Drive are similarly well-landscaped and evidence of the positive contribution that urban design requirements make to the community.

### **Signage**

Visual clutter from the proliferation of commercial signs can create street corridors that are visually unappealing and inefficient in attracting customers to businesses. The areas most in need of signage improvements are along the commercial corridors of Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, Balboa Avenue and Convoy Street in western Kearny Mesa. The effect of the excessive signage along these major streets is community-wide since these thoroughfares carry the majority of traffic in the community.

Many of these signs are illegal and will be abated with enforcement of the citywide sign ordinance. In order to improve the quality of the physical environment, there should be special attention given to signage for new development and redevelopment.

## **POLICIES**

The following policies are the basis for subsequent specific recommendations pertaining to property within the Industrial and Business Park land use designation.

- Industrially designated areas should be utilized for general industrial, business park, and scientific research and development uses as described above. Heavy commercial uses should also be accommodated given the space needs of these uses.
- New development should be located in well-designed projects with adequate provisions for transit opportunities, bicycle access, off-street parking, landscaping, service areas, support commercial and employee recreation facilities.



**Existing Zoning (1992)**  
**Kearny Mesa Community Plan**

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FIGURE

- Most of the area south of Aero Drive and west of the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Branch Library is industrially designated but includes a variety of other uses such as office and various industrial uses. The abutting or adjacent uses in Serra Mesa include residential, an elementary school and a neighborhood park. In view of these largely conflicting uses, there may be other more appropriate land use designations for this area of Kearny Mesa. The West Aero Drive Land Use Study (October 25, 2005) provides background information to assist in the analysis of future community plan amendments and/or a community plan update.
- Redevelopment should include upgrading the property to meet current development standards including landscaping and signage regulations.
- Industrially designated land should achieve and maintain lot sizes that allow the full range of development recommended by this Plan.
- Development should be reviewed for consistency with adopted airport policies, such as those set forth in the comprehensive land use plans of Montgomery Field and Miramar Naval Air Station.
- A business-serving hotel should be permitted to locate in the industrially-designated area on Murphy Canyon Road between Balboa Avenue and Aero Drive to accommodate business travelers.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Implementing Zones**

Establish the following zoning for industrially-designated areas:

- Rezone industrially designated properties which are currently zoned M-1A to M-1B in order to prevent new commercial retail use from locating on industrially designated property.
- Retain the M-1B and M-1P zones on industrially designated properties to encourage industrial and business park developments in such areas.
- Encourage the provision of M-LI zoning in Kearny Mesa to accommodate large user industrial development.

### **Floor Area Ratio**

The maximum floor area ratio for industrial and office development in Kearny Mesa, other than M-LI zoned parcels, is 0.5. Development proposals which exceed 0.50 FAR could be considered through a discretionary permit process that would address potential traffic and environmental impacts.

### **Lot size (for new subdivisions)**

The minimum lot size should be one acre. However, for M-IP zoned properties the minimum lot size should be consistent with the lot size set forth in the M-IP Zone (40,000 square feet).

### **Compatibility with Open Space Areas and Residential Uses**

Buffer open space areas and residential uses from industrial developments on industrially designated land. Twenty-five-foot setbacks with appropriately landscaped berms are the preferred treatment. If lot sizes preclude 25-foot setbacks, walls, berms and landscaping should be used with a smaller setback.

### **Development Restrictions near Airports**

The “airport influence areas” of both Montgomery Field and NAS Miramar extend into Kearny Mesa (see **Figures 23 and 29**). Noise mitigation and land use restrictions may apply to properties within the influence areas and within the Flight Activity Zone area of Montgomery Field. Proposed projects should be reviewed for consistency with the comprehensive land use plans for Montgomery Field and NAS Miramar. These plans are prepared by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG). For more information on airport related issues, see the **Conservation and Open Space Element and the Airport Element-Montgomery Field**.

### **Signage**

Signs should be designed as an integral part of any site in order to provide comprehensible messages to employees and consumers in Kearny Mesa. Whether signs are used to identify building tenants or provide direction for vehicular parking, the desired objective is to accommodate effective signage consistent with citywide regulations. Comprehensive sign programs should be encouraged in any new development in order to address the signage needs of the entire property.

### **Transit Amenities**

Provide transit amenities commensurate with transit activity as identified in the Metropolitan Transit Development Board’s Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) under transit, facility guidelines. Currently (1992), the Metropolitan Transit Development Board is studying the feasibility of constructing a LRT system to serve central and northern San Diego, including the Kearny Mesa area. Any new transit policies that are adopted in the future should therefore be considered when new development projects are proposed.

### **Landscaping Adjacent to Streets**

Extensive landscaping should be encouraged in yard areas that abut freeways, prime arterials, and other streets to buffer building tenants and pedestrians from traffic and to present aesthetically pleasing views along transportation corridors. Landscaping should be provided consistent with citywide regulations.



### **Traffic and Air Quality Mitigation**

New development should be required to provide its fair share of the mitigation measures suggested in this Plan to minimize additional negative traffic and air quality impacts within the community.

### **Business-Serving Hotel**

Allow a business-serving hotel in the industrially-designated area on Murphy Canyon Road between Balboa Avenue and Aero Drive with the approval of a Planned Development Permit. In such a hotel, rooms should be suites and may incorporate kitchenettes. Amenities may include exercise facilities and business centers. The facility and its signage should be oriented to the industrial area it is serving. On-site restaurants, banquet facilities, retail shops and conference rooms that are open to the general public may not be included with this type of hotel.

## **INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK DESIGNATION**

The Industrial and Business Park land use designation has been applied to a substantial portion of the Kearny Mesa planning area and accommodates general industrial, business park, scientific research and development and heavy commercial uses as described previously. This land use designation is proposed to be implemented by M-IP and M-IE zoning (see **Figure 7**).

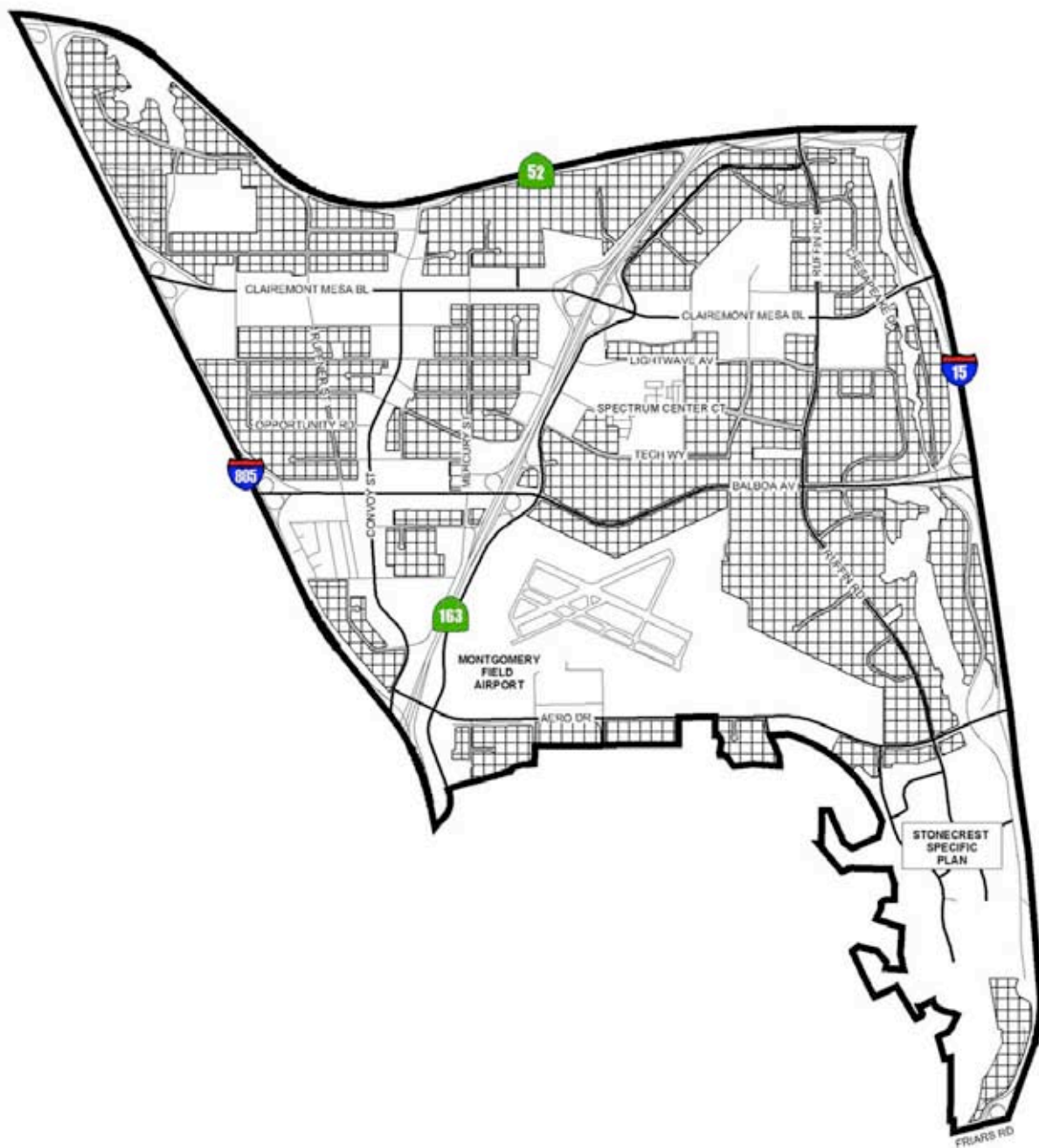
The following text pertains to special development permits and specific sites within the Industrial and Business Park land use designation:

## **SPECIAL PERMITS/SITE-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Special Permits**

A number of recent large developments in Kearny Mesa have been approved by a Planned Industrial Development (PID) permit. Development of the remaining vacant land and new subdivisions in Kearny Mesa should continue to be approved through the discretionary permitting process, particularly for sites of five acres or more in size. This discretionary review process is anticipated to be replaced by new zoning standards that would simplify project review procedures used by City staff. Until the new zoning standards are adopted, sites for which a PID permit is processed should be reviewed to provide the following:

- A cohesive circulation system that emphasizes pedestrian and bicyclist comfort and safety;
- On-site support commercial and recreational facilities and services for employees;
- Unified signage that is integrated with the overall project development concept;



**Recommended Industrial Land Use**  
**Kearny Mesa Community Plan**

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**FIGURE**

- The enhancement of landscaping themes on adjacent streets, and the creation of new landscaped focal points around entrances and outdoor plaza areas; and
- Preservation of environmental resources, such as vernal pool habitat and steep slopes.

Modifications to previously approved PIDs should be denied unless such modifications meet the goals of this community plan and provide benefits to the community.

### **General Dynamics**

General Dynamics was historically the largest civilian employer in San Diego. The firm was involved with defense-related manufacturing and product testing. In 1991, General Dynamics employed 17,000 people in the San Diego area, 12,000 at the Kearny Mesa facility. This site was purchased from the City of San Diego and occupies 243 acres. It is located to the north of Montgomery Field between Kearny Villa Road and Ruffin Road and is one of the largest properties zoned for industrial use in central San Diego. Development of the property began in 1955.

Most of the property is zoned M-1B, and approximately eight acres of land with frontage on Clairemont Mesa Boulevard is zoned M-1A. The limited area of M-1A zoned property should be retained to provide opportunities for new commercial development along Clairemont Mesa Boulevard. Approximately 48.4 acres (net) are under a CA zoning classification, and 19.0 (net) acres are designated as R-1500 with the balance of the property remaining in the M1-B zone.

Development is proposed for the property that will transform the strategically located General Dynamics facility into a vital and economically productive center, offering new employment opportunities and community-oriented uses that can serve as a catalyst for the revitalization of the community of Kearny Mesa.

The New Century Center Master Plan outlines a development concept that takes advantage of the unique attributes of the General Dynamics property, including its size, ownership, strategic location, regional accessibility and frontage onto SR-163 by establishing market-oriented retail office, residential and light industrial uses around a central “Spectrum Commons.”

The western portion, approximately 48.4 net acres, would be developed with retail and mixed-use commercial uses, and feature “Spectrum Commons” with features such as an urban open space amenity, retail, commercial and recreational uses.

The Industrial and Business Park area of the property is located in the central and eastern portions of the site, totals approximately 140 net acres and is proposed for Industrial and Business Park uses along with Business Support Commercial uses. Missile Park is intended to provide an amenity for on-site employees and users of the project, as well as the surrounding community.

The Residential area is adjacent to the Office Development, General Commercial, Business Park and Metropolitan Transit Development Board (MTDB) transit center land uses and totals approximately 19.0 net acres. The Residential area will consist of low-medium density housing.

In response to existing conditions, community plan issues and input from the community and City of San Diego staff, the following overall objectives have been established for the project:

- Develop a project that will create a substantial number of jobs and growth opportunities, including industrial and manufacturing jobs, while generating both significant revenues and a positive net fiscal impact for the City of San Diego.
- Take advantage of project's strategic location central to the City of San Diego and near the confluence of four major freeways, by promoting a marketable commercial, office, residential and retail focus on the freeway-visible western portion of the site and multi-use office/industrial uses on the eastern portion of the site.
- Facilitate a flexible multi-use framework which is adaptable to emerging market opportunities and fosters compatible commercial, residential and employment opportunities.
- Establish site planning standards and architectural design guidelines that will attract development and further a sense of community identity by creating a comfortable environment.
- Create a featured location, such as "Spectrum Commons," within a landscaped setting within the commercial area that will establish an important central focus for the overall site and, in particular, the surrounding development parcels. This featured location would be open to the public and organized with a mixture of revenue-generating venues to create an economical, self-sustaining activity for the Kearny Mesa community providing pedestrian non-vehicular linkages within the project.
- Create an economically viable and market responsive re-use plan that provides the opportunity to successfully support the costs associated with infrastructure improvements necessary to implement the Plan.
- Promote, through a variety of land uses, a diversified economic base that can help expand employment opportunities and promote revitalization of the Kearny Mesa community.
- Provide a flexible internal circulation plan capable of withstanding the benefits of future progress in the anticipated development of a regional bus transit station on the project site.
- Provide a circulation system that reduces dependence on the automobile. The project will be pedestrian-oriented, including both a bicycle and pedestrian network and transit center.
- Incorporate into the project sufficient business acreage to provide business uses to help preserve and create high-paying industrial and manufacturing employment opportunities.
- Create a vernal pool conservation bank.
- If more than 998 dwelling units are built on the General Dynamics site, park facilities should be provided in accordance with General Plan standards.

## **Solar Turbines**

Solar Turbines Incorporated occupies several facilities in San Diego that are involved in the manufacture of medium-range industrial gas turbine engines. Among these is its 43-acre plant in Kearny Mesa located on the west side of Ruffin Road, south of Balboa Avenue. Due to the potential for future expansion and/or the need to consolidate facilities on this site, and in recognition of the fact that Solar Turbines' manufactured products necessitate larger than normal building and storage areas - with a larger than average square footage per employee - the M-LI zone should be considered for this property. The M-LI zone has a maximum floor area ratio of 2.0, which would provide Solar Turbines the flexibility to consolidate or expand its facilities within the Kearny Mesa community, maintaining a large character industrial use for Solar's Kearny Mesa site consistent with the goals of this Plan.

## **Allred-Collins Industrial Park East Proposed PID**

This 17-acre site, located at the southwest corner of SR-52 and Convoy Street, should be developed under a Planned Industrial Development.

Use restrictions in this PID will be similar to those in the Allred-Collins Industrial Park West, including light industrial and manufacturing, industrial commercial, and corporate office. An alternative land use that may be considered is an auto park. Any proposed auto park must provide a comprehensive planned development rather than a disjointed strip of auto dealers.

Freeway or industrial and office serving retail commercial development such as a gas station, restaurants or related retail uses may be developed on approximately 2.4 acres of the site, located on the easternmost portion of the property. With an approved site development plan, the retail commercial land uses may be integrated into portions of the adjacent industrial park so long as the square footage of those uses does not exceed that which would otherwise be permitted on the eastern corner (i.e. the approximately 2.4-acre corner lot, at a 0.35 FAR, would permit about 36,600 square feet of commercial development). This mixed-use concept should be implemented in the following manner:

- The easterly half of the subdivision will be rezoned to M-1A in order to accommodate the mixed-use concept.
- The PID must specify that the maximum amount of retail commercial development that may occur in the project will not exceed 36,000 square feet.
- The industrial uses may develop at a 0.5 FAR.