



# PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION MEMORANDUM

Date: March 16, 2022

To: Planning Commissioners  
From: Christopher Wright, Associate Planner II  
Subject: West Pico Corridor Specific Plan Update and Architectural Overlay Expansion

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This study session is to familiarize the Planning Commission with a City-initiated project underway to update the West Pico Corridor Specific Plan and expand the Architectural Overlay.

## **Background**

On August 17, 2021, the City Council initiated amendments to the City's Centennial General Plan, Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP), West Pico Corridor Specific Plan (Specific Plan), and Title 17 Zoning to:

- Change the land use designation of two industrial parcels;
- Expand the Architectural Overlay District to include additional parcels;
- Update the Specific Plan to be consistent with the General Plan and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan (LUP), as required by State law, and expand the Specific Plan area to include additional parcels; and
- Update Title 17 Zoning to reflect and clarify the changes above.

## **Proposed Land Use Change**

The project includes a General Plan Amendment (GPA) and Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) that would change the land use designation of two split-zoned industrial parcels located at 1510 Avenida De La Estrella, comprising approximately 132,552 square feet of land area. The Heavy Industrial (HI) and Light Industrial (LI) land use designations currently run across the two parcels, resulting in "split zoning" where approximately 48,720 square feet of property is designated Light Industrial, with frontage to Avenida De La Estrella, and the remaining area of the two parcels is designated Heavy Industrial. The two parcels would be redesignated from HI and LI to be entirely HI as shown on **Attachment 3**. This would result in the following two changes to the allowed development of the property at 1510 Avenida De La Estrella:

- **Density Increase.** The allowed Floor Area Ratio (FAR) would increase from a 0.50 FAR to 0.75 FAR, resulting in an allowable increase of approximately 12,180 square feet. The maximum allowed square footage of the two parcels would change from approximately 87,235 square feet to 99,415 square feet.

- **Make Existing Use Conforming.** The land use change would make the existing non-conforming automobile towing and salvage use on the subject parcels a conforming use. The Specific Plan allows two conditionally permitted uses in HI zones that are not permitted in LI zones: 1) towing and salvage yards, and 2) concrete batch plants. The Council direction was to exclude the concrete batch plants as a possible use on the two parcels.

In summary, the intent of the land use change is to eliminate split zoning on two properties and convert an existing non-conforming use into a conforming use. The land use change is not anticipated to intensify use of hazardous materials or generate significant environmental impacts.

### **Expansion of Architectural Overlay District**

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.56.020, Architectural (-A) Overlay District, the intent of the Architectural Overlay District is to establish a visually distinct Spanish architectural district with a pedestrian orientation. The amendments would expand the Architectural Overlay District to include several properties that front primary circulation routes between the Downtown and Pier Bowl in order to integrate the architectural character of the visitor-serving districts, as shown on **Attachment 6**. The project will update maps for the General Plan, LUP, and Zoning to reflect the expanded Architectural Overlay boundaries. Existing land use designations and zoning underlying the overlay district would remain the same.

### **West Pico Corridor Specific Plan Update**

The project will update the development standards, permitted uses, design guidelines, and other content within the Specific Plan to be consistent with the Centennial General Plan and LUP, as required by State law, and to reflect the proposed land use change at 1510 Avenida De La Estrella. Additionally, the City Council supported an expansion of the Specific Plan area, as described below and shown on **Attachments 4 and 5**.

- **Entirety of Los Molinos Focus Area** - In the process of preparing the Centennial General Plan, the community identified the Los Molinos area as one of eight focus areas to have the most potential for change. Currently, a portion of the focus area is part of the Specific Plan. Several properties along the south and east boundaries are excluded. If expanded to include the entirety of Los Molinos, the Specific Plan will become a more useful and effective tool to implement General Plan goals and policies by establishing new zoning standards and design guidelines. See Attachment 1 for Los Molinos goals and policies.
- **Portion of Bonito Canyon Park and Industrial Parcels Outside Los Molinos** - The Specific Plan would also be expanded to include four industrial parcels at 1511 Avenida De La Estrella, 108 and 1607 Calle Lago, 1623 North El Camino Real; and include the west portion of Bonito Canyon Park. Currently,

these properties are zoned Light Industrial (LI) and the parcels on Calle Lago and North El Camino Real are also in the Mixed-Use (MU) Overlay District, where mixed use developments are allowed pursuant to Mixed Use 1 (MU 1) zoning standards. The Specific Plan's light industrial development standards and permitted uses would be applied to the industrial parcels added to the Specific Plan.

### **Architectural Design**

The General Plan contains several architectural policies that apply to properties in the proposed boundary of the West Pico Corridor Specific Plan. Refer to Attachment 1 for these policies that require:

- Spanish Colonial Revival architecture in gateway areas adjacent to or opposite the Interstate-5 Avenida Pico off-ramp (Policy UD-2.01);
- Spanish Colonial Revival or other true form of Spanish architecture in the Pico Plaza/Pico corridor area;
- A mix of architecture in Los Molinos that is in character with the area's heritage (LU-9.05); and
- Spanish architecture on El Camino Real parcels in the Architectural Overlay (UD-5.07).

The project will update Specific Plan design guidelines according to these policies and include a map that defines which architectural style is required for a property. See Attachment 7 for a draft map, based on the following approach to implement the policies.

- **Gateway parcels/Pico Plaza/Pico corridor.** The Specific Plan currently requires Spanish architecture in Pico Plaza. The proposed amendments clarify Spanish Colonial Revival architecture is required on gateway parcels, Pico Plaza/Corridor, and the City's treatment facility site visible from Avenida Pico.
- **Los Molinos.** Staff is collaborating with Los Molinos Business Association on design guidelines for the focus area. The association's position is generally to maintain the area's character and allow space for varied design.
- **El Camino Real Properties.** The Architectural Overlay district includes 10 Neighborhood Commercial properties on North El Camino Real that slope down to and front Calle Valle and the Los Molinos focus area. General Plan Policy UD-5.07 requires new development and major remodels on these parcels to have a true form of Spanish architecture, such as Spanish Colonial Revival, Mission, Monterey, etc. However, policy LU-9.05 also encourages architecture in Los Molinos that fits the area's character and history as a special industrial center for the surf industry, local arts, and business development. The rear of the subject parcels are part of a Los Molinos street scene on Calle Valle. To ensure development of these properties is in character with El Camino Real and Los Molinos, staff proposes amendments that require:

- Spanish architecture for site improvements that exceed the grade of El Camino Real at the property line, and
- Architecture that follows Los Molinos design guidelines where improvements do not exceed the grade of El Camino Real.

**Status and Next Steps**

Since the project was initiated, the following progress has occurred:

- Three community meetings were held in 2021 on October 7th, November 8th, and December 14th.
- Staff has had meetings with the Los Molinos Business Association to discuss topics specific to Los Molinos such as design guidelines to implement General Plan policy for the focus area.
- Michael Baker and Associates (MBA) Consulting Firm was selected to prepare an Addendum to the General Plan’s Environmental Impact Report (EIR Addendum) to fulfill requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An administrative draft is being prepared.
- Staff has been preparing a working draft of the amendments.

A Design Review Subcommittee (“DRSC”) meeting has been tentatively scheduled for March 23, 2022 to discuss the Los Molinos Design Guidelines.

Staff anticipates completing a public hearing draft of the amendments and EIR Addendum for public review in May or June 2022. Please see Table 1: Project Timeline that provides an overview of project completion. Moreover, the updated Specific Plan will be part of the Local Coastal Program Implementation Plan (IP) being processed concurrently with this project.

**Table 1: Project Timeline**

Action Items	Anticipated Date
PC Study Session (this meeting)	March 16, 2022
DRSC Meeting – Los Molinos design guidelines	March 23, 2022
Planning Commission Hearings	May-June 2022
City Council Hearings	July-August 2022

**Attachments:**

1. General Plan Policies
2. Current Land Use Map for Specific Plan Area
3. Map of Proposed Land Use Change at 1510 Avenida De La Estrella
4. Map of Proposed Specific Plan Expansion
5. Proposed Land Use Map for Specific Plan
6. Map of Proposed Architectural Overlay Expansion
7. Draft Architectural Styles Map for Specific Plan Area

## General Plan Land Use Element, Los Molinos Goal and Policies

The Los Molinos Focus Area is a special industrial district in the community. It celebrates its history as the industrial center for the surfing industry, local arts and crafts, and as an area where business incubation is encouraged. At the same time, the area continues to allow successful small businesses to maintain and expand their operations. Los Molinos is primarily an industrial and commercial neighborhood located north of the western end of North El Camino Real, bounded on the east by Interstate 5, on the west by the Avenida Pico and Marblehead Coastal, on the north by Marblehead Coastal, and on the south by Los Obreros lane and residential neighborhoods.

The area generally west of Calle Industrias and southeast of Avenida Pico is primarily an industrial area. It is envisioned as the heart of a thriving, creative business incubator district that builds upon its industrial and surf heritage. Vehicle and marine sales and services are also accommodated in this Area. The largely commercial area east of Calle Industrias and adjacent to Interstate 5 is envisioned as an institution-anchored employment center offering learning, employment and housing opportunities.

### GOAL:

A vibrant business incubator district that respects, protects, and builds upon the area's eclectic character and land uses, and that provides new educational and employment opportunities for San Clemente's residents and employees.

### POLICIES:

- LU-9.01. ***Existing Industrial Property Owners and Businesses.*** Recognizing the industrial heritage of the area and its economic benefits to the community, we allow property owners and business to maintain and expand their operations, consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Code.
- LU-9.02. ***Los Molinos Public/Private Partnership.*** We routinely communicate and collaborate with existing property owners and businesses to understand their needs, identify strategies to improve their businesses and properties, and ensure compliance with City standards and regulations.
- LU-9.03. ***Institutional, Residential and Office Uses.*** We encourage the transition of the Pico Plaza commercial center through means of a [Professional/Office Overlay](#) that requires a master plan for employment and or educational/institutional uses. The Pico Plaza is also identified in the Housing Element as having potential for mixed, residential and commercial uses with an affordable housing component. Existing uses, including residential uses that are consistent with the underlying Community Commercial land use designation, will continue to be allowed.

LU-9.04. **Transit Opportunities.** As part of planning efforts to redevelop the existing Pico Plaza commercial center, we encourage the reservation of an adequate portion of the site to accommodate a transportation center in the event that coastal railroad tracks are relocated inland.

LU-9.05. **Bike and Pedestrian Environment.** We provide a high quality bicycle and pedestrian environment with “[living street](#)” designs, consistent landscaping, lighting, sidewalks, traffic calming measures, bikeways and trails, consistent with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, Tree Ordinance and Design Guidelines.

LU-9.06. **Design Treatment.** We encourage an eclectic mix of architectural styles, colors, materials, landscaping and public art throughout the area, consistent with City Design Guidelines and the Urban Design Element.

LU-9.07. **Nearby Residential Neighborhoods.** We work with property owners, businesses and nearby residents to avoid, and where they possible, resolve conflicts between industrial operations and residents’ quality of life.

LU-9.08. **Entryways/Corridor Landscaping.** We maintain entryways and an attractive, well-defined landscaped edge along Avenida Pico and Calle de Los Molinos to signify arrival to the City of San Clemente and the Los Molinos area.

### General Plan Urban Design Element Policy

UD-5.08. **Los Molinos and the Surf Zone\*.** We encourage the use of diverse architectural styles that reflect the eclectic character and local context of these areas. Emphasis shall be placed on quality design and building materials per the Zoning Code and Design Guidelines.

### General Plan Implementation Measure 19 (from Strategic Implementation Program)

ELEMENT	GENERAL PLAN POLIC	IM #	PRIORITY LEVEL	IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE DESCRIPTION	LEAD DEPT.	STATUS
URBAN DESIGN (UD)	UD-5.08	19	MEDIUM PRIORITY	Update design guidelines in the West Pico Corridor Specific Plan to provide new design guidance for architecture and landscape character.	Community Development	Not started

## Coastal Land Use Plan Policies, Los Molinos Focus Area

- LU-64 Existing Industrial Property Owners and Businesses.** Recognizing the industrial heritage of the area and its economic benefits to the community, allow property owners and business to maintain and expand their operations, consistent with the General Plan and Zoning Code.
- LU-65 Los Molinos Public/Private Partnership.** The City will routinely communicate and collaborate with existing property owners and businesses to understand their needs, identify strategies to improve their businesses and properties, and ensure compliance with City standards and regulations.
- LU-66 Design Treatment.** Encourage an eclectic mix of architectural styles, colors, materials, landscaping and public art throughout the area.
- LU-67 Nearby Residential Neighborhoods.** Work with property owners, businesses and nearby residents to avoid, and where possible, resolve conflicts between industrial operations and residents' quality of life.
- LU-68 Entryways/Corridor Landscaping.** Maintain entryways and an attractive, well-defined landscaped edge along Avenida Pico and Calle de Los Molinos to signify arrival to the City of San Clemente and the Los Molinos area.
- LU-69 Architectural Styles.** Encourage the use of diverse architectural styles that reflect the eclectic character and local context of these areas. Emphasis shall be placed on quality design and building materials.

## Architectural Policies for West Pico Corridor

The following General Plan and LUP policies apply to architecture in the specific plan area (with proposed expansion).

### General Plan

**LU-9.06 Design Treatment.** We encourage an eclectic mix of architectural styles, colors, materials, landscaping and public art throughout the area, consistent with City Design Guidelines and the Urban Design Element. *(LU-9.06 also above for Los Molinos General Plan policies)*

**UD-5.16 Commercial Areas Outside of the Architectural Overlay.** Outside of the Architectural Overlay, new buildings and major remodels shall follow either Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style or shall follow the Design Guidelines for "Other Spanish" architectural styles. This includes new and existing commercial centers in these areas: 1) Pico Plaza/Pico Corridor, 2)

Los Mares, and 3) Shorecliffs. Not included are specific plan areas with their own design guidelines, the [Los Molinos](#) area and the [Surf Zone](#)\* along the South El Camino Real corridor.

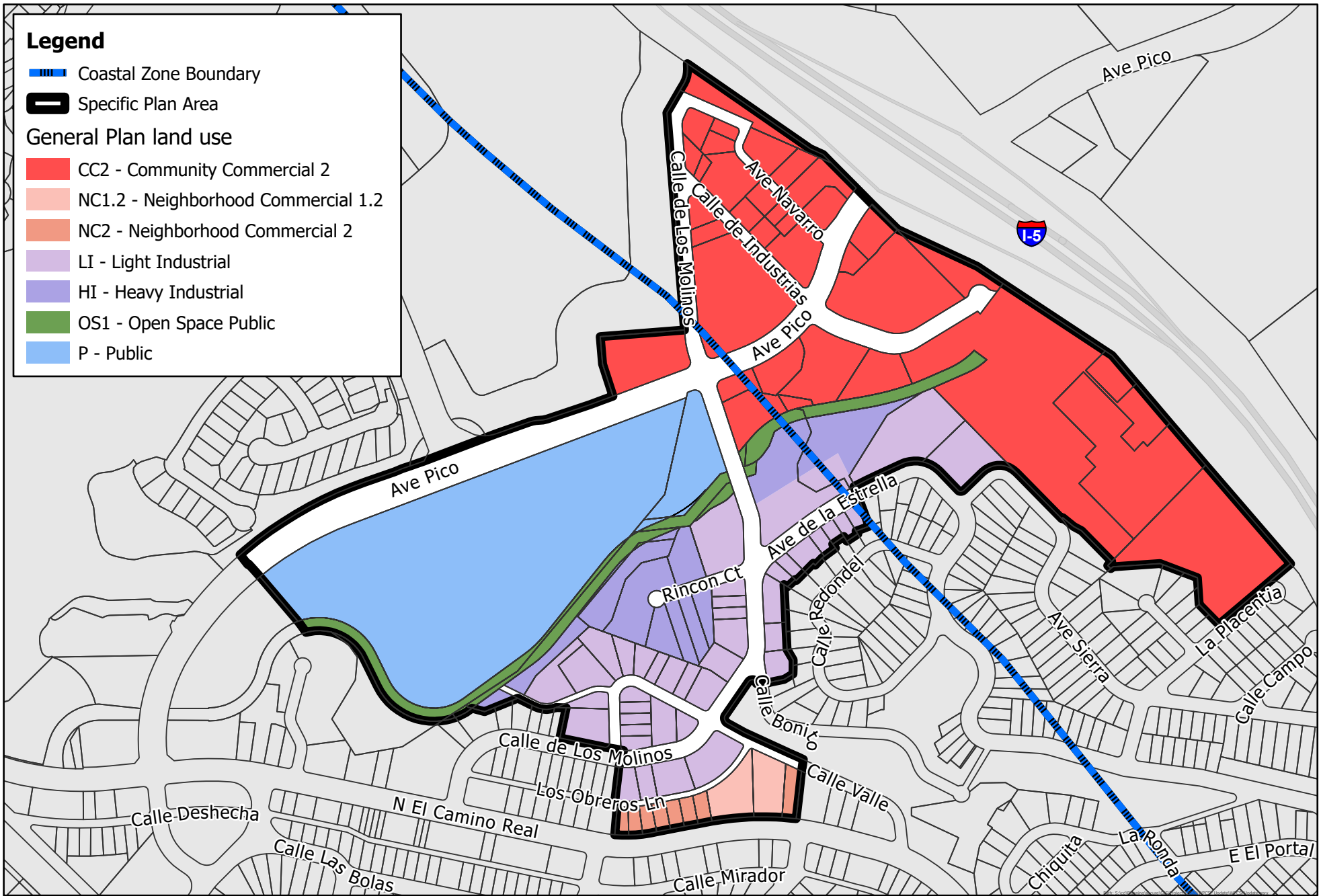
**UD-2.01 Architecture/Design Quality.** We require high quality design for buildings at visually significant locations in gateway areas. New buildings and major remodels in Gateway areas adjacent to or opposite I-5 offramps, as shown in [Figure UD-1 \[link to pdf figure\]](#), shall follow Spanish Colonial Revival architectural style, except where otherwise specified in the Design Guidelines and other adopted policies.

**UD-5.09 Public Buildings.** We require Spanish Colonial Revival architecture for the development and major remodels of public buildings, and for the development and major remodels of visually prominent, non-residential, quasi-public structures such as churches, assembly halls, theaters and cultural facilities, except in those districts allowing for a different architectural style.

## **LUP**

**LU-69 Architectural Styles.** Encourage the use of diverse architectural styles that reflect the eclectic character and local context of these areas. Emphasis shall be placed on quality design and building materials. ***(LU-69 also in list above for LUP Los Molinos policies)***



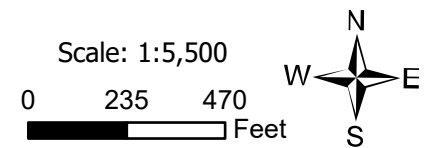


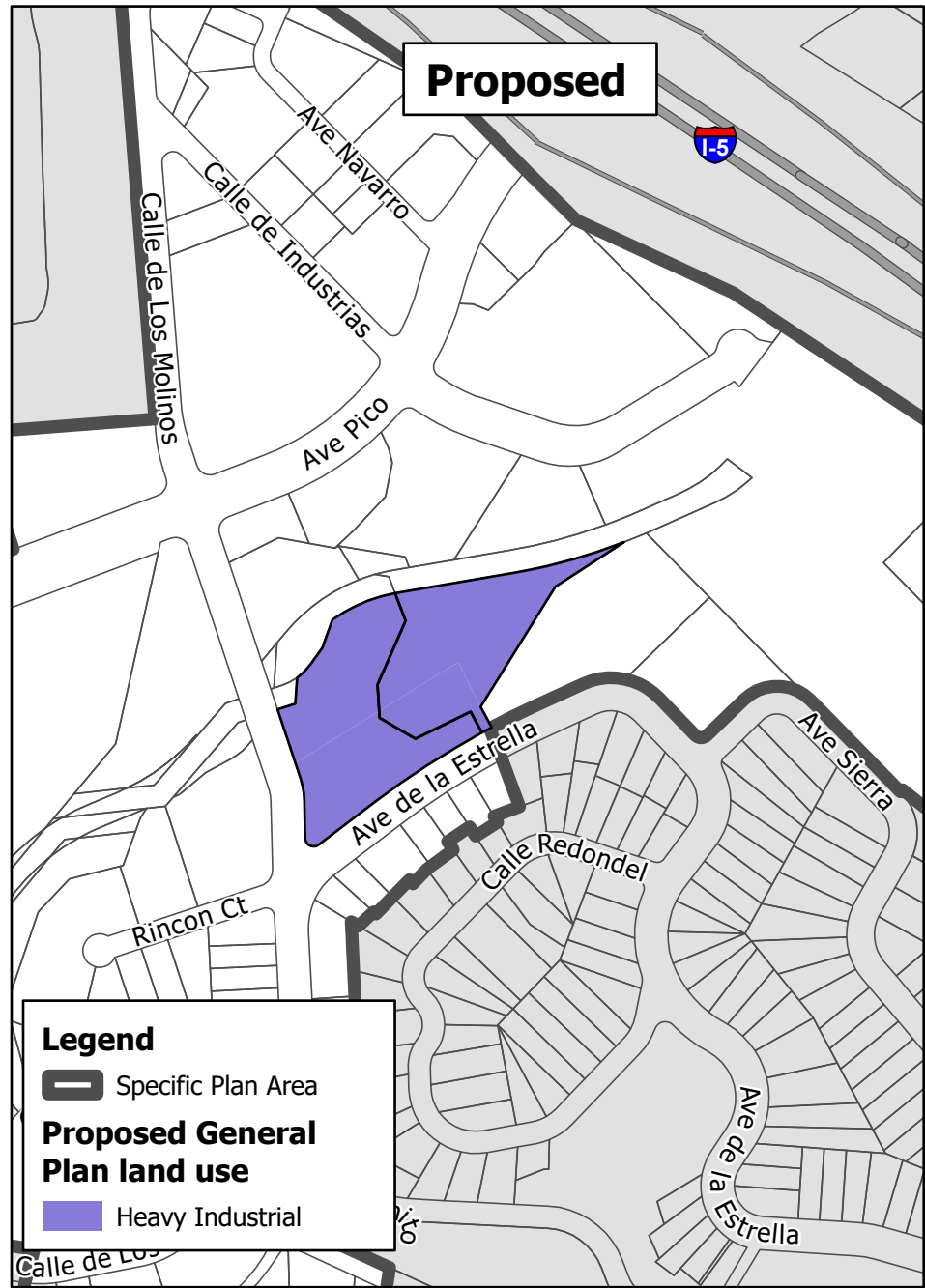
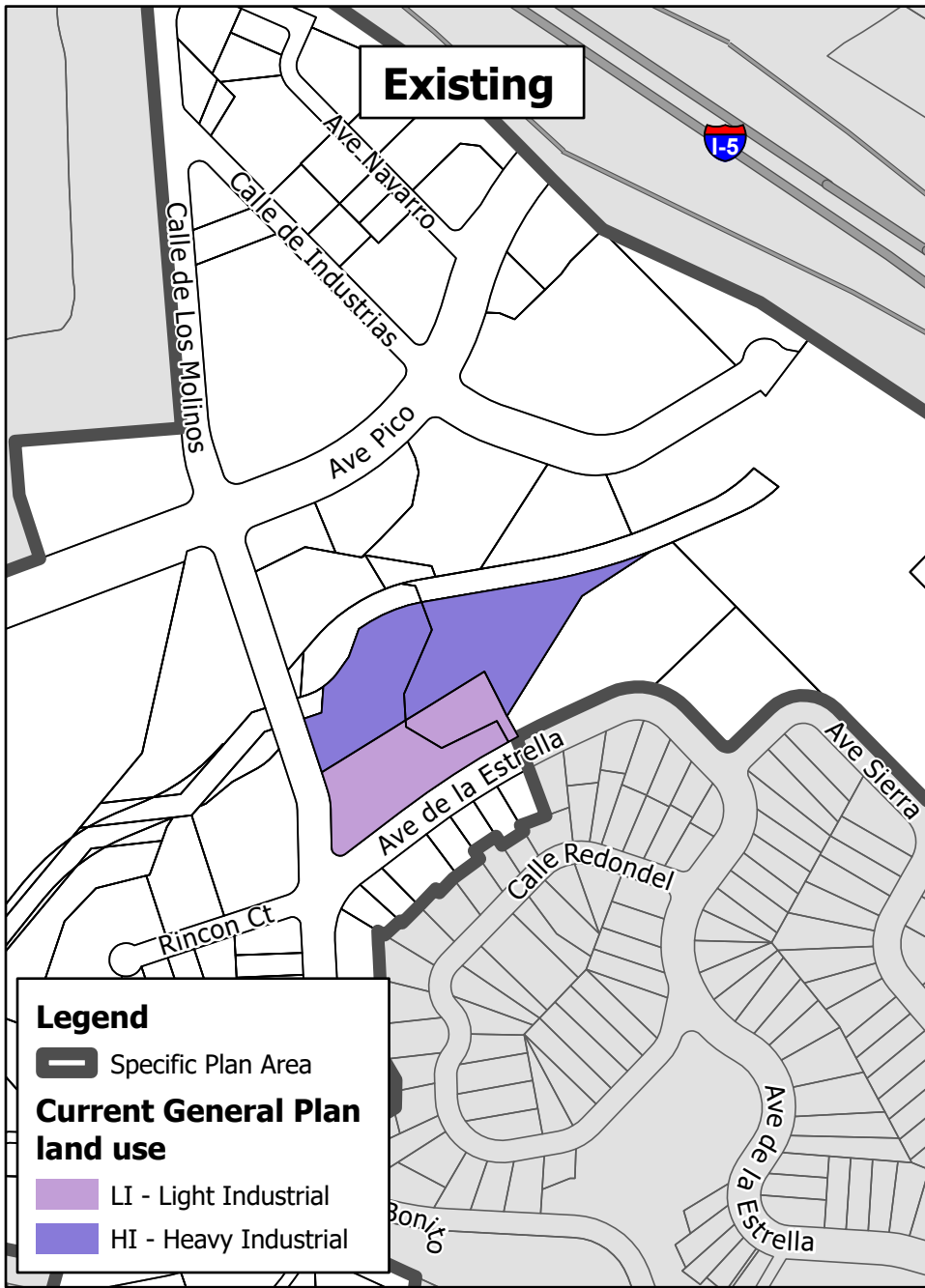
**Legend**

-  Coastal Zone Boundary
-  Specific Plan Area
- General Plan land use**
-  CC2 - Community Commercial 2
-  NC1.2 - Neighborhood Commercial 1.2
-  NC2 - Neighborhood Commercial 2
-  LI - Light Industrial
-  HI - Heavy Industrial
-  OS1 - Open Space Public
-  P - Public






**West Pico Corridor Specific Plan**  
 Current Land Use Map





**Legend**

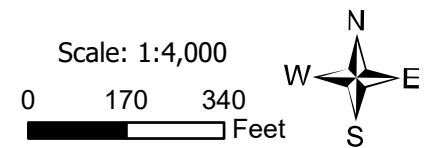
-  Specific Plan Area
- Current General Plan land use**
-  LI - Light Industrial
-  HI - Heavy Industrial

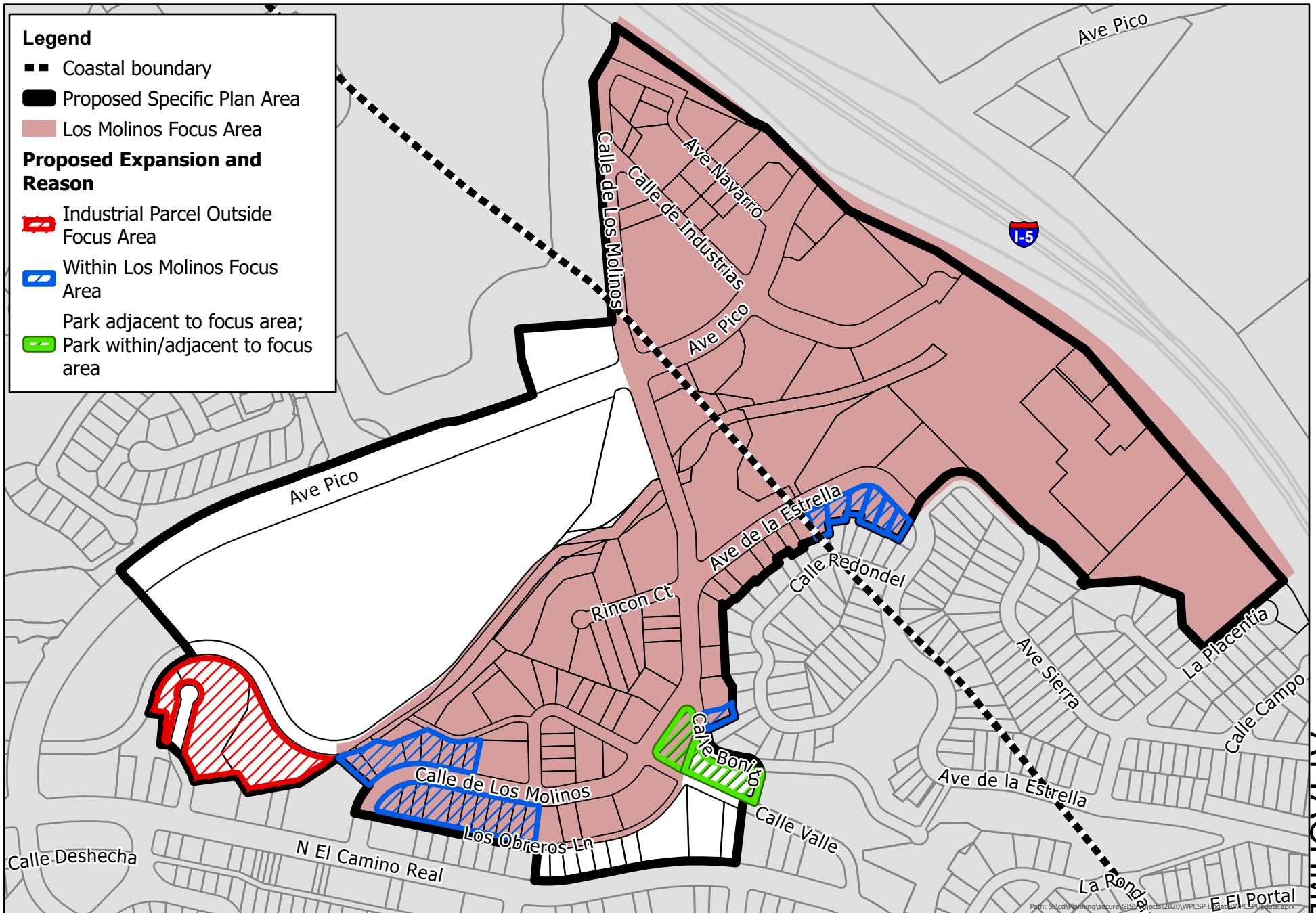
**Legend**

-  Specific Plan Area
- Proposed General Plan land use**
-  Heavy Industrial



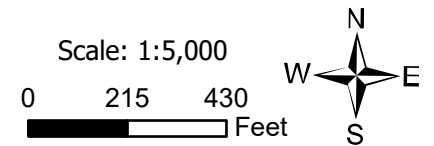
**Proposed Change at 1510 Ave. De La Estrella**  
 Change land use from Heavy/Light Industrial to Heavy Industrial  
 (except no concrete plants)



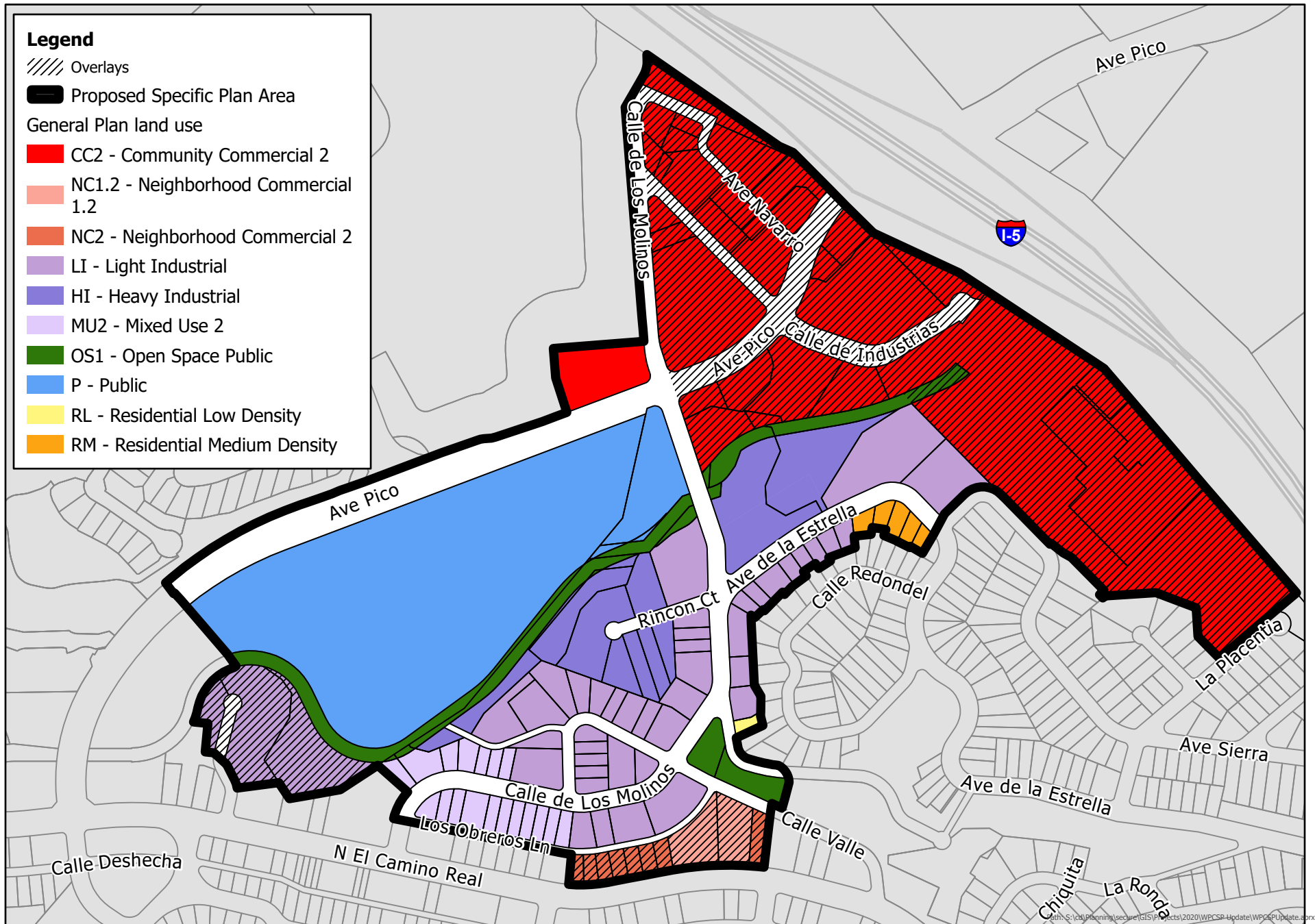


# West Pico Corridor Specific Plan

## Proposed Expansion

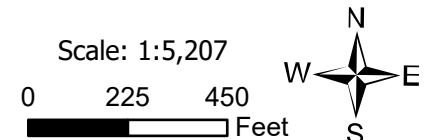


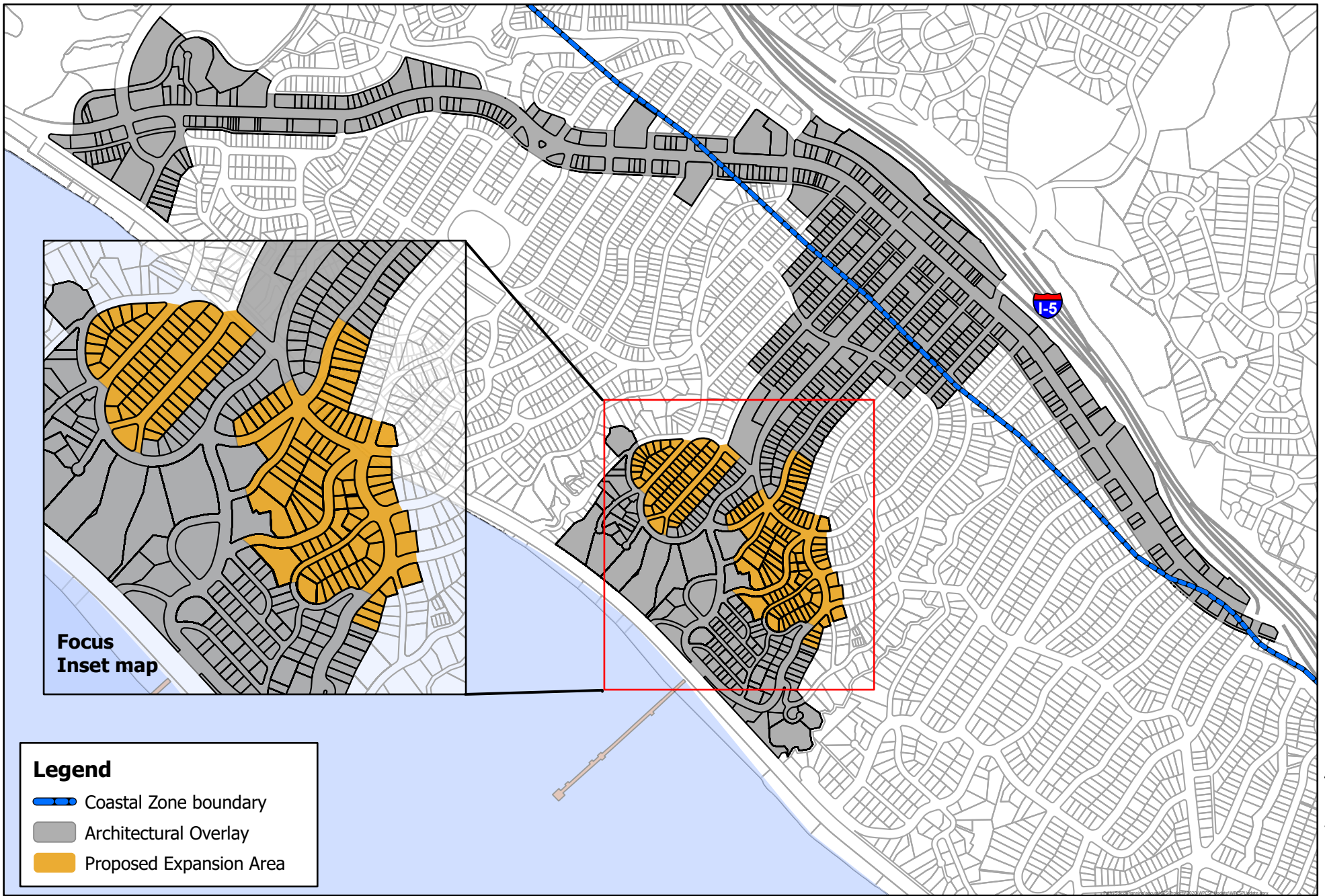
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# West Pico Corridor Specific Plan




## Proposed Land Uses





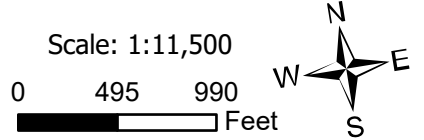
**Focus  
Inset map**

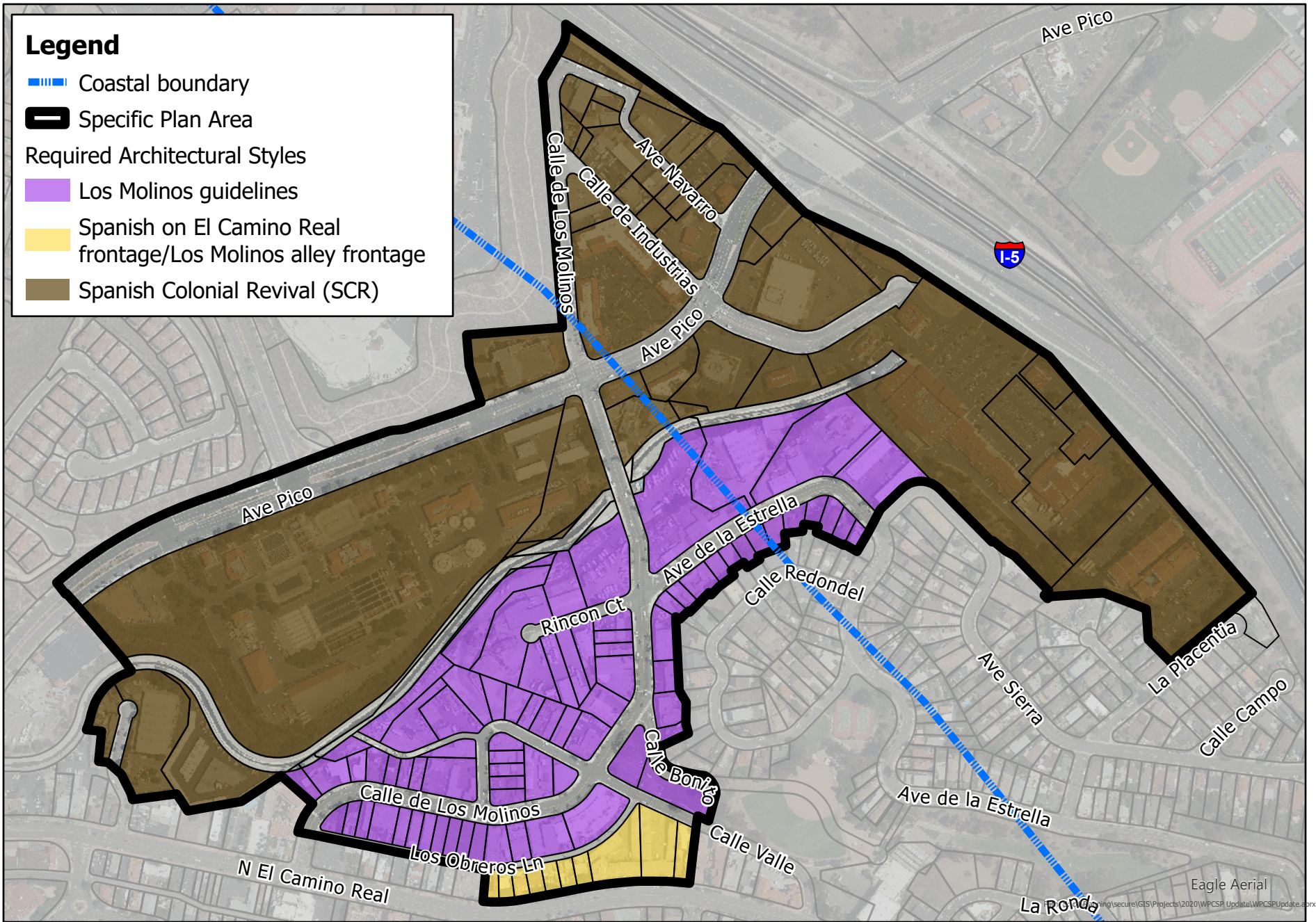
**Legend**

-  Coastal Zone boundary
-  Architectural Overlay
-  Proposed Expansion Area



# Architectural Overlay Proposed Expansion Areas





# Architectural Style Districts

