

ABOUT THE CITY OF CARSON

History

Carson was part of a Spanish Land Grant known as Rancho San Pedro that was deeded to Juan Jose Dominguez over 200 years ago. During the incorporation process, the community chose the name of "Carson" in honor of George Henry Carson, a member of the Dominguez family. The name "Dominguez," also considered as a name for the newly incorporated city, is found often in the city, labeling a street, a park, and, most notably, a California State University. Incorporated under a general law city on February 20, 1968, the city adopted the motto "Future Unlimited." Its strategic location and vacant land were part of the reason for that statement of unbridled optimism.

General Profile

Carson, located less than 20 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, is part of the South Bay section of Los Angeles County. Carson has grown from a population of 66,000 in 1968 to 96,295 in 2004. Three annexations have increased the city's size to 19.2 square miles. Carson is an attractive city to live and work in, having mild temperatures year round, and being naturally air-conditioned by westerly ocean breezes.

Carson is a culturally diverse community that is accessible by air, rail, and freeway. The MTA Blue Line stops in Carson on its route between Los Angeles and Long Beach. The city's own bus system, the Carson Circuit, provides convenient bus transportation within the city. Carson is close to the Los Angeles International Airport, the Long Beach Airport, the Port of Los Angeles, and the Port of Long Beach. Four freeways are adjacent to or run through the city. They are the Harbor (110), the San Diego (405), the Artesia (91), and the Long Beach (710). There is no other city in the Los Angeles-Orange County region that can match Carson's inventory of available space and ease of accessibility.

Carson is a no-utility tax city. It has the lowest business license fee, development and planning fees among selected Southbay cities like Torrance, El Segundo, Compton and Long Beach. This has contributed to the marketability of Carson to businesses. There are large modern petrochemical facilities (e.g. Arco, Tosco Refining, Shell), electronics manufacturers (e.g. Sony, Kenwood, Pioneer, Sansui), automobile dealers (e.g. Don Kott Ford, Cormier Chevrolet, Nissan, Mercedes Benz, Toyota, Honda), aerospace companies (e.g. In-Eros Corporation, Northrop), trucking companies (e.g. Southwest Trails, Proceed USA, USC Intermodal Services Inc.) and retail stores (e.g. Ikea, JC Penny, soon-to-open Target, Home Depot) within the City. Many have stayed for years and expanded (e.g. Pioneer Video, Liener Products, Don Kott Ford). The City has an active Chamber of Commerce working with it to retain and attract business. The City Council's emphasis on quality developments - both commercial and residential - along with a citywide beautification effort, have had a positive impact on the city. In recent years, well-known builders have chosen Carson as a location for their projects. Several new developments have recently been completed or are in the planning or construction phases.

In the area of residential developments, we have the Dominguez Hills Village, a private, gated community consisting of 581 single-family homes and condominiums. 560 of the 581 are complete with the final 21 under construction. The proposed child care facility that will service 165 children is in its final stages of review and is expected to go to Planning Commission for a public hearing this fall. The Carson Senior Village, a 64 unit residential hotel is now complete and fully occupied. The Mosaic Walk - 45 detached condominiums with private yards is under construction (see photo on the cover). 2Prairie Inc. - 8 detached condominiums on Figueroa Street is also under construction.

Carson continues to sustain the demand for commercial development despite the economic challenges. The Carson Redevelopment Agency has been involved in facilitating development that increases the general fund,

creates shopping opportunities for residents, adds to the existing housing stock and removes blighting influences caused prior to the city's incorporation. Blight elimination activities include the resolution of contaminated sites known as Brownfields. Agency and city accomplishments toward that goal are described below.

Efforts to develop an Auto Row have been a focus of Agency activities. Assisting in the expansion of existing dealerships and the attraction of new dealerships, a new Nissan franchise recently opened a state-of-the-art facility on 223rd Street, land previously owned by the Agency. In addition, a new Honda franchise facility recently completed construction adjacent to Nissan. Both these properties were former Brownfield sites. To complete the redevelopment of the block, Carson Toyota will be developing a new showroom and service center and expanding its operations on a site adjacent to the Honda dealership. The expanded Toyota dealership anticipates opening by December 2006. The existing Cormier Chevrolet dealership, also located on 223rd street, upgraded its showroom, service area and administrative offices. In partnership with the Agency, Altman's Winnebago recreational vehicle dealership completed its facility upgrade and has implemented a very aggressive marketing campaign increasing sales. Cruise America, a recreational vehicle rental business, has located adjacent to Cormier Chevrolet adding to the Auto Row. As part of the Agency activities, conceptual development guidelines were prepared and have been the basis of the Auto Row proposed zoning.

These projects are all part of the City's continued commitment to the creation of an "Auto Row" along 223rd street and the I-405 freeway. The Auto Row along the I-405 also includes previous Agency and City support of the various Don Kott dealerships. Negotiations are ongoing to sell a 10-acre Agency-owned parcel for the development of an office complex for British Petroleum along the Auto Row.

On June 1, 2003, the Home Depot Center on the California State University, Dominguez Hills campus opened with a track meet attended by 20,000 people. This world-class, state-of-the-art complex includes: a 27,000-seat soccer stadium that is the new home of Major League Soccer's Los Angeles Galaxy; a 13,000-seat tennis stadium; a 4,800-seat track and field facility (expandable to 20,000); 18 new tennis courts; five new soccer training fields and a new outdoor cycling velodrome scheduled to be completed in 2004. In addition, the Home Depot Center is the new summer training camp for the NFL's San Diego Chargers. Major events at the facility that have been held along with Galaxy soccer home games include the Women's World Cup Championship game, a professional beach volleyball tournament, professional women's tennis tournaments, International friendly soccer games. It is estimated that between 1.0 to 1.5 million visitors have come to the Home Depot Center sport complex during its first year of operation, many patronizing Carson shops and restaurants. The sports complex has generated about 800 full-and part-time jobs. No Agency Funds were used for this project. Assistance came in the form of negotiations with Cal-Trans for the placement of freeway signs.

The Agency completed in early 2003 the acquisition and demolition of the unfinished hotel located at the northwest corner of Avalon Boulevard and Albertoni Street. Agency staff has circulated a Request for Proposals and will be presenting comparative analysis seeking council direction for selection of a developer.

The Hopkins Real Estate Group, along with Genesis Shamrock Holdings, purchased the Southbay Pavilion at Carson in April 2003. A lease with Target has been signed, entitlements are being processed and construction of the new Target anchor is anticipated soon. Negotiations are also underway for a fitness center and a sit-down restaurant.

Hopkins Real Estate Group and Lennar have entered into a purchase agreement for the acquisition of the 157-acre Glaziers site. Several alternatives for development of the site are being considered. An NFL Stadium is one of the options. Negotiations between the city, Lennar/Hopkins and the NFL continue. A consultant selection process has been completed for preparation of an EIR on the site. A non-football stadium alternative will also be considered.

The Agency and the Grow America Fund loaned South Bay Amusement Center, Inc. and Go Kart World, Inc. a total of \$525,000 to complete the expansion of the current facilities located on Recreation Road just north of

the I-405 freeway. The expansion includes adding a sixth go kart track, called the "Super Track," to the existing attractions as well as adding a two-story building and other improvements. Addition of the Super Track makes a total of six tracks at the park.

The Agency also made an additional commitment of \$250,000 to the Grow America Fund, which in turn made a \$1,000,000 loan to Lucas Brothers Construction to assist in building their new 15,000-square foot facility on Figueroa Street.

For the first time, the Agency served as a conduit in the Los Angeles County Float Loan Program which provides interim financing to industrial businesses. A \$5 million loan was secured for AMSI, a manufacturer of the outer shell of airplanes and the space shuttle. This loan will assist the company to weather the economic downturn experienced by the airline industry after 9-11. It will, likewise, enable the company to retain existing jobs as well as create new ones in Carson.

In the past two years, the Agency invested over \$10 million dollars to acquire key parcels along Carson Street, between the I-110 and I-405 freeways. This has helped remove some development pressure until a Master Plan for the street could be prepared. Agency ownership of land allows the city to significantly influence the development along the Corridor and ensure community goals are met. Agency staff completed the Carson Street Visualization Study used as the spring board for the development of the Carson Street Master Plan. The process involves extensive community participation. Redevelopment Project Area Four was recently adopted adding additional territory along Carson Street. This activity allows the Agency to use its redevelopment powers and finance tools to revitalize the area and implement the Master Plan goals.

One of the Agency acquisitions on Carson Street is a 9-acre former mobile home park adjacent to an outdated shopping center anchored by a Ralph's Market. The Agency is currently negotiating to expand and modernize the Ralphs store. It will hold on to remaining idle land until the Carson Street Master Plan shall have been completed. At which time this land will either be marketed or developed through the private sector.

A retail project that includes a 107-unit Extended Stay of America Hotel, along with ancillary uses has been completed. This project is located on Albertoni Street just west of Avalon Boulevard. The Agency provided off-site improvements for this project.

Another project of the Agency is the acquisition of the former Ideal Auto Junkyard, located on Main Street between the 91 Freeway and the Carson Hotel. The Agency removed the junkyard which was a significant blighting influence in the area. Negotiations are underway to sell this property to the adjacent property owner for the development of industrial space for small businesses.

Several major capital projects have also been completed with Agency funds. These projects will promote private investment in Carson adding to the economic vitality of the city. One significant capital project was the construction of the Kay A. Calas Bridge extending Del Amo Boulevard over the I-405 freeway. To compliment the bridge, various streets west of the I-405 freeway were widened, the sidewalk improved and landscaped. These streets included Figueroa Street, Torrance Boulevard and Main Street. The Agency funds for these projects were matched by a United States Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant. Where possible, the Agency has applied for grants to leverage their funds and/or negotiated partnerships with private developers to include private sector dollars. The Agency also has various potential projects under exploratory studies to determine the feasibility of their development.

The city's Development Services Work Group also submitted an application for state and federal assistance to improve the on/off ramps on the I-405 freeway at Wilmington Avenue and Avalon Boulevard. Required matching funds will be supplied by the Agency.

Community Facilities

The city operates many community facilities. The two major facilities, City Hall and the Community Center, are located in the Civic Center Plaza. The City Hall is where most of city administration and operations are conducted. Renovation efforts have just been completed at the City Hall including the Council Chambers. The Community Center is a 73,000 square-foot facility used as a meeting center for community and business sponsored events. The Community Center East Wing improvement project, completed in October 2003, has brought in a new senior hall for Carson residents, as well as an expanded and upgraded Early Childhood Education Center.

The Parks and Recreation division, located at 2400 East Dominguez Street, operates 12 parks, 3 swimming pools, 2 mini-parks, a boxing center, and an indoor sports complex. A new skate park was opened in February 2003 at Veterans Park. Park improvements such as lighting enhancements and playground equipment replacements were completed at Anderson, Stevenson, Calas, Del Amo and Dolphin parks. Another significant park investment is the establishment of a Park Enforcement Team. This contingent of eight sheriff's deputies and one sergeant will patrol the city's park for added security and safety of Carson residents. Finally, the construction of Dominguez Park Pool was completed in the summer of 2003 (photo on the cover) and the construction of a gymnasium at Stevenson Park was completed in the summer of 2004 (photo on the cover).

Government and Administration

The City of Carson has a Council-Manager form of government, with an elected Mayor, a Mayor Pro Tem, three Councilmembers, and a City Manager. The City has had a directly elected Mayor since April 1992. Carson residents, during a special election in March 2000, voted to lengthen the term of the mayor from two to four years. The four-year term for Mayor went into effect with the City's March 2001 general municipal elections. Councilmembers are elected to alternating four-year terms. Other elected City officials include the City Clerk and City Treasurer; both also serve four-year terms.

The city government is operated on a competitive system of appointments and promotions. The positions of City Manager and City Attorney are appointed by, and serve at the pleasure of, the City Council. The Work Group General Managers are appointed by, and serve at the will of, the City Manager. All other positions are filled by appointment, based on structured competitive examinations. Currently, the city has 395 authorized full-time positions, which provide a wide range of municipal services. Reorganization in FY 1999/00 has streamlined operations from 12 departments into nine distinct work groups namely City Council, City Attorney, City Clerk, City Treasurer, City Manager, Administrative Services, Economic Development, Development Services and Public Services.

The significant investment in commercial, retail and residential development demonstrates the city's resolve to live up to a reputation as a business-friendly, well-managed and financially-sound city. Its financial position should sustain its strength, allowing the Council to invest in programs that will provide a high quality of life for its residents and a vibrant economy for its business community.