



# CITY OF CARSON

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING: September 26, 2006

SUBJECT: Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan, Establishment of Mixed Use-Carson Street Zone District, GPA No. 78-06, ZCC No. 153-06

APPLICANT: City of Carson

REQUEST: To recommend approval of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan, establishment of the Mixed-Use-Carson Street Zone District, adoption of a General Plan amendment for Carson Street for a Mixed-Use designation in two areas and adoption of a Zone Change to Mixed Use-Carson Street for a portion of the District

PROPERTY INVOLVED: 1.75 mile section of Carson Street between the I-405 San Diego Freeway and the I-110 Harbor Freeway

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### **COMMISSION ACTION**

- Concurred with staff
- Did not concur with staff
- Other

### **COMMISSIONERS' VOTE**

<b>AYE</b>	<b>NO</b>		<b>AYE</b>	<b>NO</b>	
		<b>Cottrell – Chairperson</b>			<b>Saenz</b>
		<b>Pulido – Vice-Chair</b>			<b>Tyus</b>
		<b>Faletogo</b>			<b>Verrett</b>
		<b>Graber</b>			<b>Wilson</b>
		<b>Hudson</b>			

***Item No. 10A***

## I. Introduction

The Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan (Master Plan) focuses on a 1.75 mile section of Carson Street between the I-405 San Diego Freeway and the I-110 Harbor Freeway. The Master Plan is intended to help the community share their vision with those participating in development efforts along Carson Street. The Master Plan will be used as a guide by the City Council, Redevelopment Agency, Planning Commission and other Commissions for review of public improvements such as streetscape and environmental graphics, as well as private development and related improvements. There are four actions being requested from the Planning Commission as follows:

1. *Adopt the Carson Street Mixed-Use Master Plan*  
The Master Plan is a policy document that compiles the major goals and objectives for the future development on the Carson Street Corridor. Adoption of the Master Plan shows support for the various land use policies, development standards, design guidelines, public improvements and rehabilitation and revitalization efforts. The Master Plan will be implemented through specific changes to the Carson Municipal Code, the General Plan and support of public and private improvements consistent with the plan.
2. *Amend General Plan to include additional properties within the Carson Street Mixed Use Corridor*  
The proposed General Plan Amendment changes one lot which was inadvertently left High Density to Mixed-Use and adds the southeast corner of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard to the Mixed-Use designation.
3. *Adopt New Mixed Use Zone District for Carson Street*  
The MU-CS (Mixed-Use - Carson Street) zone district is a new zoning district which will replace the existing CG (Commercial, General) and CR (Commercial, Regional) zoning and MUR (Mixed-Use Overlay) district on Carson Street. It will implement the Master Plan through standards and design guidelines for land use.
4. *Adopt an Ordinance to place a portion of the Carson Street Corridor in the new MU-CS zone district*

## II. Background

The preparation of the Master Plan involved an interactive strategic planning approach consisting of a series of community meetings, city staff reviews, consultant coordination and consensus building.

On July 25, 2006, the Planning Commission held a workshop on the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan and on August 22, 2006, a public hearing was held on the Zoning Ordinance, General Plan Amendment and Zone Change. All property owners and tenants within the Master Plan area and within 500 feet were provided with notification of the workshop and public hearing. Comments were received from the Planning Commission and the public. The Planning Commission continued the

item until September 26, 2006, to incorporate comments into the ordinance and respond to Commission questions. Staff has reviewed all comments and developed recommendations for the Planning Commission to consider in adopting the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan. In addition, staff has made revisions to the zoning district ordinance as suggested by the Planning Commission.

### III. Analysis

#### Carson Street Mixed Use Master Plan

The Planning Commission is requested to carefully review the Master Plan to determine if the vision for the Carson Street Corridor properly reflects the community goals and objectives. Adoption of the Master Plan will establish a reference point for all land use decisions and will lead public and private investments in a direction that supports the Master Plan. The Master Plan is a policy document that is not to be interpreted literally. The City and Redevelopment Agency will maintain flexibility to interpret the Master Plan and to provide implementation through various ordinances, policies and programs. The Master Plan is seen as a long term document that will bring about substantial change and improvement to the Carson Street Corridor if implemented in a consistent and qualitative manner. A map of the entire Carson Street Corridor is attached as Exhibit 1.

#### General Plan

The General Plan currently designates the majority of the property within the Carson Street Mixed Use Master Plan area as Mixed Use. The General Plan Land Use Map and Element are proposed to be changed from General Commercial to Mixed-Use at southeast corner of Avalon Boulevard and Carson Street to allow for a potential mix of commercial uses with senior rental and work force condominium housing to be built in this area. There is also one lot at the rear portion of 616 Carson Street that was inadvertently left with a High Density Residential land use designation during the General Plan Update. The property should have the same designation as the immediately adjacent lots on the same property and should be included in the Mixed-Use land use designation. (See maps Exhibits 2 and 3.)

The General Plan Land Use Element Policy LU-8.2 states:

“Continue to monitor the success of mixed-use projects within the Carson Street mixed use corridor and promote mixed use projects at appropriate sites within this area.”

Designating the southeast corner of Avalon Boulevard and Carson Street for Mixed-Use at this time is appropriate since an opportunity to have commercial development in conjunction with senior housing and work force housing has presented itself. The development of this corner could provide the catalyst for further mixed-use development within the Carson corridor and make this intersection a major focal point with the Civic Center on the north side and a major mixed-use development on the

south side. The changing of the designation on this corner is in conformance with this policy and with the vision of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan. The Planning Commission at their meeting on August 22, 2006, recommended that the intersection of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard be a priority for development and public improvements.

### Zoning District

Currently the opportunity for residential and mixed-use developments is provided for though the MUR (Mixed Use Residential) overlay district that is combined with the commercial zones, CN (Commercial, Neighborhood), CG (Commercial, General) and CR (Commercial, Regional) being the underlying zones. This allows all of the General Commercial and Regional Commercial uses to be permitted and commercial development standards to be used unless specifically prohibited or changed due to the MUR overlay district. Under the new ordinance, the MU-CS (Mixed-Use -Carson Street) zone district will become the zone designation. Only the uses and standards described in this zone will apply to the MU-CS zone district. It will be easier for property owners, developers and staff to determine the uses and standards for the property since all the information will be in one place in the zoning code. Carson Street will have a unique code which addresses the specific issues on Carson Street and permits development in a way that is envisioned by the residents.

The current MUR overlay district applies to properties located from the Harbor Freeway to Avalon Boulevard. The General Plan Update created a Mixed Use-Residential land use designation that applied to all of these properties with the exception of the properties located at 655 E. Carson Street and 21601 Avalon Boulevard (shopping center/Mobil gas station) and 21801 Avalon Blvd (Ralphs/Carl's Jr. shopping center). As such, Zone Change Case No. 153-06 would remove the MUR overlay district from all properties along Carson Street and replace with the MU-CS zone except that the above mentioned properties would retain the current underlying CR zone district.

### Zoning Code

The zoning code sets the standards that must be followed when building on property within the various zone districts. It specifically lists uses which are permitted, uses which need a conditional use permit and prohibited uses. The MU-CS (Mixed Use-Carson Street) zone district will have all the components of the other zoning codes i.e. yard setbacks, height, etc. but it will be specific to the Carson Street Master Plan area.

### Development Standards and Guidelines

The development standards proposed in the Master Plan have been included in an ordinance amendment to become part of the regulatory requirements for the MU-CS (Mixed Use-Carson Street) zone district. Development standards are mandatory and include density, uses, yards and height. The guidelines will also be part of this

ordinance but guidelines are not mandatory like zoning codes. The Planning Commission, City Council and Redevelopment Agency will be encouraged to follow the guidelines when reviewing development proposals. The proposed changes in the ordinance for Mixed-Use-Carson Street were discussed in the staff report for the August 22, 2006 public hearing. The entire ordinance is attached as Exhibit 4 and the August 22, 2006 staff report is attached as Exhibit 5.

An extensive list of Guidelines are proposed to be added to the Mixed-Use – Carson Street District. They are located under Section 9139.1 J. of the attached zoning code (Exhibit 4). The guidelines incorporate the principles of sustainable design. The guidelines will serve as best practices recommendations for all new development within the Carson Street corridor. These guidelines are intended to promote a more sustainable built environment through specific design and construction techniques. Guidelines unlike standards are not mandatory.

The Guidelines include site design and development, building composition and architecture, conservation, public improvements, landscaping, and signs. They cover areas such as use of recycled materials, energy conservation techniques, creating a sense of place on Carson Street, providing public art and other recommendations that will upgrade the area and be environmentally friendly.

The proposed ordinance establishing permitted uses, site and development standards and design guidelines for Mixed-Use development on Carson Street conforms to the General Plan Map and Land Use Element and to the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan. The adoption of the new zoning code for MU-CS (Mixed-Use – Carson Street) creates appropriate standards and guidelines to facilitate the orderly development of the Carson Street Corridor. Zone Change Case No. 153-06 applies the new MU-CS zone district to specific properties by replacing the existing zone districts.

- Public Improvements

Planning Commission prioritized the public improvements at their meeting on July 22, 2006. These priorities are included in the August 22, 2006 staff report attached as Exhibit 5.

- Planning Commission Comments

The Planning Commission at the public hearing on August 22, 2006 made a number of suggested revisions and requests for additional information. The following summarizes the staff's response to the suggestions:

Green Buildings – The Commission requested that staff research the possibility of providing incentives to developers to use green building standards when constructing in the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Corridor. Staff researched

programs that other cities are using and programs that the utility companies have. The programs include:

1. The City of Santa Monica has a Green Building Program which requires certain practices in Siting and Form, Envelope and Space Planning, Construction Management, Landscape, Materials, Energy, Transportation and Water Systems. Some of the programs are required and some are recommended. Examples of the required programs include:
  - Minimize storm water runoff to Impermeable areas
  - Specify recycled products per EPA purchasing guide
  - Heat Swimming pools and preheat process hot water with unglazed solar collectors

Examples of recommended programs include:

- Install heat recovery systems on wastewater plumbing
- Specify and install water and energy conserving appliances
- Shape and design the interior to enhance daylight and natural airflow distribution

The U.S. Department of Energy published a “Blueprint for Greening Affordable Housing: Developer Guidelines for Resource Efficiency and Sustainable Communities.” The purpose of this publication is to demonstrate the building green does not always cost more. You could build a better quality home by incorporating efficient building practices without increasing first costs year decreasing lifecycle costs for the homeowner, resident and operator. Some of the recommendations include:

- Open courtyards for solar exposure and good cross ventilation which lowers utility bills for residents
- Open stairways and light portals for daylighting which reduces spending for outdoor lighting and water use
- Clustering of vegetation to reduce irrigation needs
- Changing contractor behavior by educating contractors on green building

The City of Los Angeles has a publication about sustainable building which makes recommendations, analyzes costs and lists benefits. This publication recommends anything from light colored roofs to double glazed windows to solar heating. There is also a pilot program in the City of Los Angeles

presented through Global Green USA and funded through the Ford Foundation. This program is studying the feasibility of developing new or modifying existing tools that create new “assets” i.e. fund by means of greenhouse gas emissions reduction strategies. These strategies include carbon trading market and offsets that can be leverages to fund building programs. It would be a cap- and- trade system similar to that used by AQMD where emission reduction in one area could be sold to offset emissions in another area. The program that is being studied would aggregate emissions reductions from a small business, a housing development and a school in the same urban neighborhood and turn those reductions into tradable emissions credit. The funds from the resulting trade could then be directed towards community reinvestment. This program is still in the preliminary stages but if it develops, it could possibly be used by the Redevelopment Agency.

The utility companies all offer rebate programs for installing Energy Star appliances, energy efficient heating and cooling systems, lighting and ultra low flow toilets. Multi-family units are offered rebates for retrofitting existing apartments with energy efficient improvements and installing approved equipment in new apartments and condominiums. The Gas Company offers a \$200,000 rebate per eligible customer per year for installing qualified industrial and commercial boilers, water heaters, etc.

The City of Carson has some of the requirements i.e. urban runoff mitigation plans, water efficient irrigation systems, recycled materials storage areas, demolition and construction waste recycling, etc. There are some areas that Carson may want to consider adding to their requirements. For example, the following could be made mandatory, recommended or given points for incentives:

- lighting fixtures, plumbing fixtures and appliances that minimize energy and water consumption.
- bike racks and bike lockers and/or storage areas where they are not currently required,
- minimization of the amount of impervious surface to reduce heat islands and reduce storm water run-off.
- an increase the amount of materials used which are made from recycled materials

The following are incentives that the city may want to consider or make part of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan or ordinance:

- allow a fourth story for using a specified number of green building construction programs

- Initiate an expedited permit processing program for green buildings.
- Reduce the permit fees for double pane windows, solar systems, etc. to off-set the cost of the purchase and installation of these products.
- The city's Redevelopment Agency could consider giving priority to projects that use green construction programs.
- Start a program to educate the public and contractors on green building through brochures, the website and seminars.

A program would have to be developed which granted points for certain types of programs, construction materials, etc. and determined what the criteria would be for being eligible for the various incentives. The Environmental Commission could work with staff to develop such a program and brochure.

2. The Commission requested that staff research any programs which could be used to help business owners that have to remove nonconforming signs. The City's Redevelopment Agency has several programs that could be used either for signs or commercial rehabilitation of storefronts or centers. The city has a \$5,000 grant for signs which could be used to remove a nonconforming sign and replacement with a sign that meets the criteria of the Carson Mixed-Use District Master Plan. The city also has \$10,000 grants for storefront rehabilitation, loans of \$25,000 per storefront and a matching program for projects that require more than \$25,000. The matching program requires the business owner to match the amount of money loaned by the city. The larger grants and loans are for major rehabilitation projects. There are approximately 23 properties with nonconforming pole signs which could take advantage of the program and several individual businesses and centers that could be help with the commercial rehabilitation program. An evaluation will be conducted to determine properties to be prioritized for participation. Some properties or business may not be recommended for participation.
3. The Commission asked staff to determine if the impact on parking spaces from the proposed street improvements was studied as part of the Carson Street Mixed Use Corridor Project. The city's Traffic Manager has indicated that the issue was studied during the General Plan Update and the Carson Street Master Plan process. Parking will remain on Carson Street so the businesses with minimum parking will not be impacted.
4. The Commission asked that the staff address the street lighting.
5. The Commission asked that pet grooming with a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) be an allowed use. Staff has added pet grooming as an allowed



use in commercial buildings but not in buildings that have a mix of residential and commercial uses.

6. The Commission asked that the landscaping for walls be placed in front or behind the wall. If space allowed, the landscaping should be placed in front of the wall. This requirement was removed from the ordinance because it only referred to existing mobile home parks.
7. The Commission asked if there would be recreation and open space for children. There is a requirement for open space and recreational space for all residential projects. There is a requirement for a tot lot to be included in multi-family developments.

Staff made a number of revisions to the ordinance that was presented at the August 22, 2006 meeting, however, the changes were to clarify the requirements. There were no substantial changes. The Planning Commission should carefully review the permitted uses, uses subject to a conditional use permit and prohibited uses. The intent is to create a balance of uses appropriate for a mixed residential and commercial district.

#### **IV. Environmental Review**

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) SCH No. 2001091120 was prepared to analyze the impacts of General Plan Amendment. The changes included in the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan were analyzed as part of the EIR. The Final EIR was certified by the City Council on October 11, 2004. An Initial Study was prepared and it was determined if there would not be any additional impacts which were not anticipated in the General Plan EIR. A Negative Declaration was prepared, noticed and sent to the County Recorder's office for posting. The property owners and tenants within the affected and those within 500 feet of the corridor were noticed 20 days prior to the hearing.

#### **V. Conclusion**

The Carson Mixed-use District Master Plan was prepared with community input and participation. It will have a major impact on the city's main corridor once the plan is implemented. Adopting the Master Plan, changing the zoning on the corridor, amending the General Plan, adopting a special zone, Mixed-Use-Carson Street, developed specifically for this corridor and changing the zoning on portion of the Carson Street Corridor to Mixed-Use-Carson Street is the first step in the process to change the corridor into a liveable, pedestrian friendly downtown retail district.

## VI. Recommendation

It is recommended:

- That the Planning Commission open the public hearing, and take public comments.
- That the Planning Commission adopt Resolution No. \_\_\_\_ recommending that the City Council adopt the Carson Street Mixed-District Master Plan with the modifications as approved by the Planning Commission, approve the Mixed-Use – Carson Street Zoning District, approve General Plan Amendment No. 78-06 and adopt Zone Change Case No. 153-06.
- That the Planning Commission forward the following recommendation to the City Council and Redevelopment Agency concerning the implementation of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan:
  - Install gateway landscaping in parkways and medians between the I-405 Freeway and Avalon Boulevard and between the I-110 Freeway and Figueroa Street
  - Provide pedestrian-friendly environments in the downtown, mixed-use and residential districts along Carson Street by moving the curb 4 feet into the street and narrowing lanes slightly and by installing curb extensions at most intersections: First, from Avalon Boulevard to Main Street; Second, from Main Street to Figueroa Street.
  - Concentrate improvements at the Carson Street/Avalon Boulevard intersection
  - Install Duratherm (or approved equivalent decorative material) crosswalks with a unique pattern developed for Carson Street at all intersections.
  - Refurbish and replant landscaped medians.
  - Develop a plaza at the Carson Street/Avalon Boulevard intersection.
  - Incorporate public art into the above improvements
  - Make the sidewalk between I-110 Harbor Freeway and Figureroa Street a straight sidewalk and eliminate the meandering one proposed in the Master Plan

- That the Planning Commission make a recommendation concerning a Green Building Program for the Carson Street Mixed-Use District.

**VII. Exhibits**

1. Carson Street Mixed- Use District Corridor Map
2. General Plan Amendment Map
3. Zoning Change Map
4. Mixed Use District – Carson Street Zoning District Zoning Code
5. Planning Commission Staff Report August 22, 2006
6. Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_ recommending that the City Council adopt the Carson Street Mixed-District Master Plan with modifications as approved by the Planning Commission, approve the Mixed-Use – Carson Street Zoning District, approve General Plan Amendment No. 78-06 and adopt Zone Change Case No. 153-06.

**Please bring your copy of the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan.**

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Ketz, Planning Consultant

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Sheri Repp, Planning Manager