



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING: November 13, 2007

SUBJECT: Design Overlay Review No. 951-06, Conditional Use Permit No. 626-06, Variance No. 498-07, Variance No. 499-07

APPLICANT: Carson Mobil
22802 S. Figueroa Street
Carson, CA 90745

REQUEST: To expand the market of an existing gasoline station by converting a repair shop and construct an automatic carwash (exterior drive-through automobile laundry). The variance requests are for the reduction of the required front and rear yard setbacks for the proposed carwash building.

PROPERTY INVOLVED: 22802 S. Figueroa Street

COMMISSION ACTION

- Concurred with staff
 Did not concur with staff
 Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Chairperson Faletogo			Graber
		Vice Chair Hudson			Saenz
		Cannon			Verrett

Item No. 11A

I. Introduction

Section 9138.13(D) of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) requires that exterior drive-through automobile laundries be located on properties with at least 25,000 square feet and at least 150 feet of street frontage on each street. The subject property is only 20,788 square feet and has less than 150 feet of street frontage on 228th Street. The applicant is requesting the direction of the Planning Commission as to whether or not it would support an ordinance amendment to allow the construction of an automatic carwash (exterior drive-through automobile laundry) on a nonconforming property.

Date Application Received

- July 26, 2006: Design Overlay Review No. 951-06, Conditional Use Permit No. 626-06
- June 6, 2007: Variance No. 498-07, Variance No. 499-07

Applicant / Property Owner

- Carson Mobil; 22802 S. Figueroa Street, Carson, CA 90745

Project Address

- 22802 S. Figueroa Street

Project Description

- Expansion of a gasoline station market by converting a repair shop and adding an automatic carwash (exterior drive-through automobile laundry) at an existing gasoline station. The repair shop will be eliminated in order to accommodate a larger market without increasing the size of the existing building. The application includes the following requests:
 - Design Overlay Review No. 951-06 for the review of the design of the gasoline station market, carwash, and existing site conditions;
 - Conditional Use Permit 626-06 to allow for the use of an exterior drive-through automobile laundry at an existing gasoline station;
 - Variance No. 498-07 for reduction of the required 10.6-foot front yard setback to 3½ feet; and
 - Variance No. 499-07 for reduction of the required 10-foot rear yard setback for properties abutting residential property to 6 feet.

II. Background

Previous Uses of Property

- According to the County Assessor's records, the existing building was constructed in 1958 for a gasoline service station. According to the building permits, a 108 square-foot building overhang was constructed in 1967 and a 780 square-foot addition to the mini-mart was constructed in 1988. The total size of the existing building is 2,002 square feet.

Previously Approved Discretionary Permits

- Design Overlay Review No. 118-80: On August 12, 1980, the Planning Commission approved a commercial building. Building permits do not indicate the building was ever built.

III. Analysis

Location/Site Characteristics/Existing Development

- The project site is located at the southeastern corner of Figueroa Street and 228th Street.
- The project site is 20,788 square feet (0.48 acre) in size, fairly flat (less than two percent slope) and located in a commercial and residential area.
- The site is used as a gasoline service station comprised of two lots with the existing building and gasoline pump stations located on the northern lot and landscaping and a driveway located on the southern lot.
- Eight pumping stations are provided.
- Existing development surrounding the subject property include:
 - North: Condominiums and apartment complexes
 - East: Single-family homes
 - South: Single-family homes on both sides of Figueroa Street
 - West: A commercial shopping center located across Figueroa Street

Zoning/General Plan/Redevelopment Area Designation

- The subject property is zoned CG-D (Commercial, General – Design Overlay).
- Surrounding properties to the north across 228th Street are zoned RM-25-D (Residential, Multifamily – 25 units per acre – Design Overlay); to the east and south are properties zoned RS (Residential, Single-family); the shopping center to the west across Figueroa Street is zoned CG-D.
- The General Plan land use designation of the subject property is General Commercial.
- The General Plan land use designation of the properties to the north is High Density; to the east and south is Low Density; and to the west is General Commercial.

Applicable Zoning Ordinance Regulations

The following table summarizes the proposed projects' consistency with current site development standards for the CG-D zone district and other zoning code sections applicable to the proposed use:

TABLE 1 – ZONING ORDINANCE CONFORMANCE

Applicable Zoning Ordinance Sections	Compliance	Non-Compliance
Section 9131.1 – Uses Permitted		CUP req'd
Section 9135.3 – Street Frontage and Access	X	

Applicable Zoning Ordinance Sections	Compliance	Non-Compliance
Section 9136.12 – Height of Buildings and Structures	X	
Section 9136.23 – Front Yard		VAR req'd
Section 9136.24 – Side Yard	X	
Section 9136.25 – Rear Yard		VAR req'd
Section 9136.27 – Space Between Buildings	X	
Section 9136.4 – Trash and Recycling Areas	X	
Section 9136.6 – Parking, Loading, Truck Maneuvering and Driveways		See Issues of Concern below
Section 9136.7 – Signs	X	
Section 9136.8 – Utilities	X	
Section 9136.9 – Site Planning and Design		DOR req'd
Section 9138.13(D) – Exterior Drive-through Automobile Laundries		Min. lot area of 25,000 s.f. not met; Min. street frontage of 150' not met; Min. 10% landscaping req'd
Section 9162.21: Parking Spaces Req'd		Legal non-conforming
Section 9162.24: Parking for the Disabled and Associated Signing and Ramping	x	
Division 7 – Environmental Effects	x	
Part 6 – General Development Standards	x	

IV. Discussion

Issues of Concern

- Issue – Carwash: The project site is triangularly shaped and has a very narrow depth. The proposed carwash will be located in the southern portion of the site where the depth is narrowest. Staff has a number of issues with the proposed project as follows:
 - Motorists that wish to further hand dry or vacuum their vehicles after a carwash must exit onto Figueroa Street, a public street, and re-enter the site. Thus, Figueroa Street would be used for vehicular circulation;
 - The proposed carwash building is located only seven feet from the eastern perimeter wall (rear yard) which separates the site from

residential properties. Noise and mist generated from the carwash may impact residents to the east;

- o Vehicular circulation on the site is difficult and may create safety issues;
- o The proposed carwash building is located in the required front yard and the exit door is oriented so that it will be visible to vehicles heading northbound on Figueroa Street.

Additionally, the site's triangular configuration makes site planning very difficult. In staff's early review, there were concerns about the location of the trash enclosure, parking, air/water dispensers, public telephones, and carwash building, not to mention the queuing and exiting from the carwash, and vehicular circulation on the site. There were enough concerns that in staff's letter to the applicant dated August 22, 2006, staff indicated that, "the plans must be revised to eliminate the new carwash from the application. A portion of the CUP fees will be refunded to you once the carwash is withdrawn." Thus, staff indicated to the applicant early in the review process that the carwash would not be supported. However, staff was willing to support the mini-market expansion and elimination of the repair shop because it would improve the gas station.

Subsequently, staff met with the applicant and property owner to discuss the concerns and staff's lack of support for the carwash. Staff mentioned that the lot does not meet the minimum lot size requirement of 25,000 square feet for an exterior drive-through automobile laundry. The owner and applicant stressed the importance of constructing the carwash in order for the mini-market expansion to move forward; unless the carwash is built, the rest of the project would not work financially. At the meetings, the applicant and property owner expressed their willingness to address the numerous concerns discussed in staff's letters, but the minimum lot size issue was lost in the discussion. Over the next several months, the applicant worked to address the other issues including gaining written consent from adjacent neighbors for the proposed carwash.

On June 6, 2007, almost 10 months after staff's previous letter, the applicant submitted variance requests for reduction of the front and rear yard setbacks. Staff reviewed the revised plans based on the issues that were discussed in the August 2006 letter, however, the lot size issue, which had only been discussed in meetings, was overlooked. The applicant's most recent revised plans were submitted on August 20, 2007. At that time, staff reevaluated the project for lot size and other requirements. Under Section 9138.13 of the CMC, exterior drive-through automobile laundries are subject to the requirements discussed in the following table.

**TABLE 2 – SECTION 9138.13(D)
Exterior Drive-Through Automobile Laundries**

	REQUIREMENT	PROPOSED	COMMENTS
Uses Permitted	Exterior Washing	Exterior Washing	Requirement met
Minimum Lot Area	25,000 s.f. in conjunction w/ retail gasoline sales	20,788 s.f.	Subject lot does not meet minimum lot requirement
Minimum Street Frontage	150 feet on each abutting street	74 feet on 228 th Street	Subject lot does not meet minimum street frontage requirement
Landscaping	10% of 20,788 s.f. or 2,079 s.f.	2,976 s.f.	Requirement met
Access/ Circulation	Adequate on-site circulation	Cars exiting carwash must exit directly onto Figueroa Street	Traffic Engineer ok with current design although there is concern with exiting from the carwash onto Figueroa Street
Site Improvements	Enclosed mechanized washing	Enclosed mechanized washing	Requirement met
Performance Standards	Prevention of noise, odors, steam, by-products; Disposal of waste products	Screen walls provided to minimize impacts to abutting residences	Screen walls may not be effective during excessively windy days

As discussed above, the proposed project does not meet certain requirements. Staff indicated to the applicant that a variance for front yard and rear yard setback could be considered because of the unique shape of the property. However, there are still many other issues that must be resolved.

- **Issue – Ordinance Amendment:** The applicant requests direction from the Planning Commission as to whether an ordinance amendment to change Section 9138.9(D) is worth pursuing. The ordinance amendment could reduce the required minimum lot area for carwashes at a gasoline station from 25,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet, and modify the minimum street frontage requirement so that 150 linear feet is provided on at least one street rather than “each abutting street.”

Staff researched the ordinances of several other cities and discovered that each city is different in regulating carwashes as discussed in the following table.

TABLE 3 – ORDINANCES OF OTHER CITIES

CITY	REQUIREMENT	COMMENTS
Bellflower	CUP for carwash	30,000 s.f. min. lot size for auto repair; Other restrictive requirements for auto repair
Torrance	CUP for carwash	Restrictions for service station & gas station w/ alcohol sales
Lomita	CUP for carwash in C-G	Prohibited in C-R & D-C
Long Beach	Various requirements	Permitted in CCA, CCP, CCR, CCN, CHW, & CH zones; CUP req'd for CS & CT zones; CHW zone permitted as admin use; Conditions req'd under Sect. 21.52.206
Compton	CUP req'd for C-L zone; Permitted in C-M zone	Parking: 6 spaces/tunnel, plus 5 spaces for queuing; Prohibited in SD zone
Redondo Beach		Certain restrictions for service stations including 20,000 s.f. min. lot size

Based on staff's research, it does not seem unreasonable to amend the requirements of Section 9138.9(D). Carwashes would still be regulated under the requirements of a conditional use permit (CUP). However, the ordinance amendment would affect multiple properties within the city and not just the subject property. For example, reducing the minimum lot size requirement from 25,000 square feet to 20,000 square feet could increase the total number of gasoline stations that can have carwashes. Staff has not yet researched the number of properties that would be affected but can furnish that information if the Planning Commission is in support of the ordinance amendment.

V. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

- **CONSIDER** and **DISCUSS** the contents of this staff report; and
- **PROVIDE** direction to staff regarding the modification of Section 9138.9 (D) related to minimum lot area for carwashes at a gasoline station.

VI. Exhibits

1. Development plans (under separate cover)

Prepared by: _____
John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner

Reviewed and Approved by: _____
Sheri Repp, Planning Manager