



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC HEARING: February 12, 2008
SUBJECT: Design Overlay Review No. 1014-07, Variance No. 501-07, and Zone Change Case No. 158-08
APPLICANT: City of Carson
701 E. Carson Street
Carson, CA 90745
REQUEST: Construction of the Hemingway Park Aquatic Center
PROPERTY INVOLVED: 16700 S. Avalon Boulevard

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

I. Introduction

Date Application Received

- August 15, 2007: Design Overlay Review No. 1014-07 and Variance No. 501-07

Applicant / Property Owner

- City of Carson; 701 E. Carson Street, Carson, CA 90745

Project Address

- 16700 S. Avalon Boulevard

Project Description

- The proposed project is for the construction of the Hemingway Park Aquatic Center, which includes a swimming pool, activity pool, waterslides, office building, restrooms, a locker enclosure, mechanical building, and parking lot. The design of the buildings resembles the architecture found in the Caribbean. The building walls will be a fiber-cement siding painted a yellowish color, and the roof will be made of turquoise-blue metal. The application includes:
 - Design Overlay Review (DOR) No. 1014-07 for construction of the aquatic center within a Design Overlay district;
 - Variance (VAR) No. 501-07 for the reduction of the required front yard setback along San Pedro Street and the elimination of landscape screening; and
 - Zone Change Case (ZCC) No. 158-08 to change the zone from ML-D (Manufacturing, Light – Design Overlay) to OS (Open Space) to be consistent with the General Plan and the remainder of the park.
- Hemingway Park is 13 acres and located in the northern portion of the city. The project site is approximately one acre and is located in the western portion of Hemingway Park between Avalon Boulevard and San Pedro Street. Access and parking for the aquatic center is located at the terminus of San Pedro Street.
- There are eight underground utility lines running through San Pedro Street, seven of which will be located underneath the parking lot. The eighth utility line, a 2.5-inch Shell gasoline line, is abandoned and a portion of it will be removed as a result of this project.
- Currently, the project site consists of a parking lot, landscaping, and a basketball court.

II. **Background**

Site History

Hemingway Park, which covers 13 acres, was acquired by the City in 1980 from the County of Los Angeles and was originally called Avalon Park. Currently, the park includes:

- Two ball-fields, one lit and one unlit;
- Two basketball courts, one lit and one unlit;
- Two lit tennis courts;
- Soccer field;
- Playground;
- Snack bar;
- Picnic areas;
- Meeting/craft rooms; and
- Staff office.

Public Safety Issues

- The Carson Sheriff's Station reported 12 incidents at Hemingway Park between February 1, 2007, and January 31, 2008, which include six incidents of narcotics, two incidents of aggravated assault, and one incident of grand theft, grand theft vehicle, vehicle burglary, and petty theft.

III. **Analysis**

Existing Site Characteristics and Location

Hemingway Park is located in the northern portion of the City of Carson and is generally flat except for some hills located in the western portion at the project site. Access to the main portion of Hemingway Park is via Gardena Boulevard to the north. Access to the proposed Aquatic Center site is via Avalon Boulevard and San Pedro Street.

There is currently a parking lot, landscaping, and a basketball court located at the project site. The parking lot will be redesigned to accommodate traffic entering from San Pedro Street.

The closest single-family residences to the project site are located approximately 200 feet to the southwest across Avalon Boulevard. A residential neighborhood also exists to the east of Hemingway Park.

Southern California Edison owns the properties to the south of Hemingway Park where there are existing power lines and utility towers that run east-west.

There are underground utility lines that run through the center of San Pedro Street that traverse the existing parking lot. These underground utility lines include:

- *Richfield Oil*, 6-inch line
- *Shell Gasoline*, 2.5-inch line

- Southern California Gas, 2- and 3-inch lines
- Southern California Water, 6-inch line
- S. SW. C.L. 2116, 8-inch line
- Union Oil Gas, Two 6-inch lines

Zoning and General Plan Designations

The project site is located in the ML-D (Manufacturing, Light – Design Overlay). The remainder of Hemingway Park is in the OS (Open Space) zone. The General Plan land use designation for the entire Hemingway Park, including the project site, is Recreational Open Space. Properties to the north of the project site across San Pedro Street and to the west across Avalon Boulevard are designated Light Industrial and are zoned ML (Manufacturing, Light). Industrial uses are located to the north and west of the project site.

Applicable Municipal Code Sections

The following table identifies the applicable sections of the Zoning Ordinance and whether the proposal complies. For those sections that are identified as “Non-Compliance” further discussions are contained in a subsequent section of this analysis:

TABLE 1 – ZONING CONFORMANCE

Applicable Zoning Ordinance Sections	Compliance	Non-Compliance
Section 9131.1 and 9141.1 – Uses Permitted	X	
Section 9146.23 – Front Yard		Variance request required along San Pedro Street
Section 9146.3 – Fences, Walls and Hedges	X	
Section 9146.4 – Trash and Recycling Areas	X	
Section 9162.21 – Parking Spaces Required	X	
Section 9162.42 – Parking for the Disabled and Associated Signing and Ramping	X	

Required Findings: Site Plan and Design Review

Section 9172.23, Site Plan and Design Review, of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) states a Site Plan and Design Review may be approved by the Planning Commission only if the following findings can be made in the affirmative:

- a. Compatibility with the General Plan, any specific plans for the area, and surrounding uses.

- b. Compatibility of architecture and design with existing and anticipated development in the vicinity, including the aspects of site planning, land coverage, landscaping, appearance and scale of structures and open spaces and other features relative to a harmonious and attractive development of the area.
- c. Convenience and safety of circulation for pedestrians and vehicles.
- d. Attractiveness, effectiveness and restraint in signing, graphics and color.
- e. Conformance to any applicable design standards and guidelines that have been adopted pursuant to Section 9172.15.

Required Findings: Variance No. 501-07

Section 9172.22, Variance, of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) states a variance request shall be granted only when, because of special circumstances applicable to the property, including size, shape, topography, location or surroundings, the strict application of the Zoning Chapter deprives such property of privileges enjoyed by other property in the vicinity and under identical zoning classification. The applicant is requesting a variance for Section 9162.52 of the CMC, which requires a parking facility located adjacent to a public street to be screened by a minimum of 10 feet of landscaping. The proposed project will reduce the required front yard setback along San Pedro Street to less than 10 feet with no landscaping provided between the parking lot and the sidewalk. However, it is staff's opinion that the design can still be supported based on the following discussion.

All of the required findings pursuant to Section 9172.22 can be made in the affirmative. The project site is located in the westernmost portion of Hemingway Park between Avalon Boulevard to the west and San Pedro Street to the east. The site is physically constrained in that there are underground utility lines to the east along San Pedro Street, Southern California Edison (SCE) power lines to the south, and a capped oil well to the northeast of the proposed bathhouse. The City is in the process of vacated San Pedro Street south of the industrial properties to the north. However, the proposed project would still require that parking be located less than 10 feet from the San Pedro Street right-of-way. Since the project site is located at the terminus of San Pedro Street, the reduced front yard would not be conspicuous from Avalon Boulevard. Furthermore, because of the irregular shape of the project site, providing a 10-foot setback along San Pedro Street would result in a reduced front yard setback along Avalon Boulevard where the project would be more visible to the public, or would result in the loss of parking spaces which would impact the operations of the aquatic center. Further details can be found in the attached Resolution.

Zone Change Case No. 158-08

The subject property is approximately one acre and is located in the westernmost portion of Hemingway Park. The subject property is zoned ML-D (Manufacturing, Light – Design Overlay) and has a General Plan Land Use designation of

Recreational Open Space. The California Government Code requires that a city's zoning ordinance and map be consistent with its general plan land use element and map. The proposed Zone Change Case from ML-D to OS (Open Space) would make the zoning consistent with the General Plan Land Use Designation of Recreational Open Space, as well as consistent with the zoning for the rest of Hemingway Park. The OS zone would be more appropriate for an aquatic center located at a public park.

Pursuant to CMC Section 9172.13, the Planning Commission is required to formulate a written recommendation to the City Council which includes the reasons for the recommendation and specification of the relationship of the proposed ordinance to the General Plan.

Issues of Concern

- ISSUE: Parking – Currently, there are 67 parking spaces located in the western parking lot at the terminus of San Pedro Street that are available for park users. These parking spaces are mostly for users of the ball field, basketball court, and picnic areas. The main parking lot along Gardena Boulevard on the north side of the park has 28 parking spaces. This parking lot is mostly used for the office, tennis courts, basketball court, playground, and other amenities located on the north side of the park.

Development of the aquatic center would result in a total of 78 parking spaces at the terminus of San Pedro Street, and removal of the basketball court. Thus, there would be a net gain of 11 parking spaces in the western parking lot. Although adequate parking spaces would be provided for the aquatic center based on the CMC, staff is concerned that there may be a parking impact during busy days when the aquatic center and ball field are both being used. The capacity for the swimming pools is 119 persons, with a possibility of an additional 649 persons located on the pool deck; the multi-purpose room/conference room has a capacity of 36 persons. The following table summarizes the proposed project's conformance to the parking requirement.

TABLE 2 – PARKING REQUIREMENT

	Requirement	Building/Park Size	Parking Required
Aquatic Center Bathhouse Bldg.	1 sp. per 300 s.f. (Gen. Commercial)	4,009 s.f.	13
Swimming Pools	1 sp. per 150 s.f. (Health & Exercise)	5,934 s.f.	40
Aquatic Center Total			53
Remainder of Park	2 sp. per net acre	13 acres	26
TOTAL REQ'D PARKING FOR ENTIRE PARK			79
Parking Available for Aquatic Center in Western Parking Lot		78	
TOTAL PROPOSED PARKING FOR ENTIRE PARK		106	

- ISSUE: Building Design/Screening - The design of the buildings is meant to resemble architecture commonly found in the Caribbean. Staff is concerned that the western elevation of the bathhouse building and the perimeter block wall along Avalon Boulevard are too plain and susceptible to graffiti, especially in an area in which the Sheriff's Department has reported a number of criminal incidents. To address this concern, landscaping will be proposed between the aquatic center and Avalon Boulevard. However, to further enhance the western elevation in the event that landscaping fails to grow or is not maintained, the Planning Commission may consider requiring decorative block to be used as part of the wall, or for pilasters, a cap or breaks to be incorporated into the wall. The Planning Commission should consider the fact that the proposal is a public project that is funded by the City, and that limited funding may be available for architectural enhancements.
 - *Proposed Condition/Change:* None proposed, but the Planning Commission may consider requiring additional architectural features to be added to the western wall along Avalon Boulevard.

ISSUE: Landscaping – The development of the Hemingway Park Aquatic Center would result in the removal of dozens of mature trees. Although it is intended that additional trees be planted, especially along Avalon Boulevard where the project site is most visible, staff has not yet received a preliminary landscape plan. As such, project-specific conditions have been included to require a landscape plan that shows proper screening.

- *Proposed Condition/Change:* Prior to issuance of a building permit, a landscape plan shall be reviewed and approved by the Planning Division. The landscape plan shall screen the western elevation of the aquatic center, including the block wall, so that it is not susceptible to

graffiti. Additional trees shall be planted in and around the parking lot area and along Avalon Boulevard to provide shade and screening.

IV. Environmental Review

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15332, the proposed project is an infill development project located at an existing public park and is categorically exempt.

V. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

- **APPROVE** the Categorical Exemption;
- **APPROVE** Design Overlay Review No. 1014-07 and Variance No. 501-07, and recommend approval of Zone Change Case No. 158-08 to the Carson City Council subject to the conditions of approval attached as Exhibit "B" to the Resolution; and
- **WAIVE** further reading and **ADOPT** Resolution No. _____, entitled "A Resolution of the Planning Commission of the City Of Carson approving Design Overlay Review No. 1014-07 and Variance No. 501-07, and recommending to the City Council approval of Zone Change Case No. 158-08 for the construction of the Hemingway Park Aquatic Center located at 16700 S. Avalon Boulevard."

VI. Exhibits

1. Resolution
2. Zone Change Case No. 158-08 Map
3. Development Plans

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

Reviewed and Approved by: _____
Sheri Repp-Loadsman, Planning Manager

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