



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION: February 9, 2010
SUBJECT: Carson Street Master Plan Workshop
APPLICANT: City of Carson
REQUEST: Discuss the Carson Street Master Plan
PROPERTIES INVOLVED: Carson Street Master Plan

COMMISSION ACTION

☐ Concurred with staff
☐ Did not concur with staff
☐ Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Chairperson Faletogo			Gordon
		Vice-Chair Saenz			Graber
		Brimmer			Park
		Diaz			Schaefer
					Verrett

I. Introduction

The Carson Street Master Plan (Master Plan) was adopted in 2006 to guide the development and redevelopment of the Carson Street corridor between Interstate 405 and Interstate 110 (Corridor). The vision of the Carson Street Master Plan is "the creation of a distinct district along the Carson Street Corridor with a "main street" character, featuring a unique pedestrian friendly mixed use environment." The Master Plan strives for the following goals and objectives:

- Create a beautiful, vibrant, "main street" that reflects the community's vision and embodies the identity of the city of Carson.
- Create a distinctive mixed-use character throughout Carson Street.
- Create a livable, pedestrian friendly downtown district near the civic core.
- Create distinctive gateways on either end of Carson Street at the freeway intersections.
- Capitalize on the cultural diversity of Carson as a vehicle for restaurants and other retail uses.
- Direct revitalization efforts to support desirable and viable commercial development.
- Promote a high standard of amenity in public places.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide a historical overview of events that have led to the adoption of the Master Plan. In addition, at the workshop we will look at the Corridor as it exists today and discuss the assets and challenges associated with the corridor. We will examine the vision for the Corridor and identify steps to achieve the goals and objective of the Master Plan.

II. Background

A series of efforts were completed during an eight year period that led to the adoption of the Master Plan in 2006. The initial step was adoption of the Mixed Use Residential General Plan Land Use Designation in 1994. This designation allowed a mixture of commercial and residential within the same building, same parcel, or within the same area and established a maximum density of 35 dwelling units per acre for residential developments. The next immediate step, also in 1994, was the adoption of the Mixed Use Residential Overlay District (MUR), development standards, and non-conformity provisions for residential properties. A series of visioning exercises were completed in 1997, 2000, and 2002 for the Corridor and General Plan. Auto repair facility non-conformity provisions were adopted in 2004 followed by adoption of the Mixed use-Carson Street (MU-CS) zoning designation in favor of MUR and non-conformity provisions for pole signs in 2006.



Analysis

The implementation of the vision for the Corridor involves a multi faceted approach that involves continuing implementation of current projects and programs, developing and implementing new projects and programs, and committing funds necessary for the implementation of these programs.

Continuing Projects and Programs

Redevelopment Agency Owned Properties

The Redevelopment Agency (Agency) owns several large properties within the corridor. Following the development of the Villagio mixed-use development, the City Center mixed-use project on the corner of Carson Street and Avalon is the first major redevelopment project of the Corridor. The first phase of this project is currently under construction for 86 age-restricted housing units. The second phase will include 150 additional units and approximately 20,000 square feet of retail space on the first floor. In addition, the Agency has entered into Exclusive Negotiating Agreements (ENAs) with two more developers for 616 and 425 properties on Carson Street. If the proposals from these developers are accepted by the Agency Board, the Agency will enter into a Disposition and Development Agreement (DDA) with the developers to develop these properties.

Commercial Facade Improvement Program

The Commercial Facade Program provides funding for improvements to the facade of existing commercial buildings together with landscaping and parking enhancements. Staff is currently processing two applications along the Corridor and working with others to submit applications. Ample funding is available for this program with the exception of properties within Project Area 4. Staff is currently exploring creative ways to add funding to the Project Area 4 facade improvement budget. Staff expects 2010 to be a very active year for this program within and outside this corridor.

New Projects and Programs

RDA will continue to solicit new development proposals from developers on all remaining RDA properties along Carson Street as deemed appropriate by staff and the Agency Board. Other new programs will include streetscape demonstration block project (Demonstration Block Project), public art program, Carson Street freeway interchange landscaping project, and implementation of the non-conforming provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

Demonstration Block Project

The Master Plan envisions significant improvements to the Corridor by constructing pedestrian friendly sidewalks with benches, trash receptacles, bus shelters, pedestrian scale lighting, and landscaping. The Master Plan proposes to move the curb into the street by 4' on each side of the street to increase landscaping opportunities and provide a landscaped buffer between the sidewalk and the street.

In this scenario, the parking lane will continue to function. Consultants will need to be retained to prepare these details. The entire cost of the streetscape project is estimated to be \$12,000,000. The 2010-11 budget allocates \$1,000,000 for this project. The Demonstration Block Project would cost approximately \$4,000,000 if the entire Corridor were to be complete in three phases. The City Council or Redevelopment Agency would have to allocate additional funds to in order to go ahead with the Demonstration Block Project.

Public Art Program

The City Council has directed staff to draft a public art ordinance potentially requiring new development and remodeling projects to pay a public art fee. These fees will be used to provide public art pieces throughout the City. However, the accumulation of these fees will take some time. The Master Plan recommends adding public art pieces to the Corridor. The public art displays along Carson Street can either be part of the Demonstration Block Project or a separate effort. Regardless, the City Council would need to allocate additional funds for this purpose.

When completed, the draft ordinance will be presented to Economic Development Commission, Planning Commission, and the City Council. In addition, the City Council has directed staff to work with a local artist to provide temporary art displays on two of Agency owned parcels on Carson Street.

Carson Street Interchange Landscape Project

One of the goals stated in the General Plan is to enhance freeway corridors and interchanges that act as gateways into the city. The Carson Street interchange is the main gateway into the Corridor. The landscaping is minimal for this interchange and would benefit from a major overhaul. Staff expects this project to cost approximately \$1,500,000. No funding is currently allocated for this project in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Staff will be requesting the City Council to consider allocating funds for this project and the Avalon interchange landscape improvements.

Implementation of the Non-conforming Provisions

Non-Conforming uses or structures are defined as lawfully established structures or uses which are no longer in conformance with the provisions of the zoning ordinance due to changes in such provisions after their construction or initiation of the use. The implementation of the non-conforming provisions of the zoning ordinance is one of the most important and potentially most controversial steps in implementing the Master Plan's vision since it could mean that certain structures and uses could not continue to exist as they do today, therefore, creating a direct financial burden on the property and business owners. As required by state law, the ordinance includes amortization periods that provide a reasonable time for the property or business owners to recoup their investments in the property prior to the required abatement.



The zoning ordinance has created several categories of non-conformity within the Corridor that addresses auto repair uses, residential structures, and pole signs. These non-conformities were created through adoption of amendments to the zoning ordinance during several public workshops and public hearings. All impacted property owners were notified of these hearings.

Auto Repair Uses

This provision of the zoning ordinance was adopted in 2004 and requires all auto repair business to apply for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) within 5 years from the adoption of the ordinance. The primary reason to establish this procedure was to ensure that auto repair businesses within the corridor (and elsewhere in the city) are held to high standards and are consistent with the Master Plan's vision. The deadline to file CUPs expired last November and not all businesses have filed a CUP despite receiving written notification from staff.

Staff is currently reviewing a number of CUPs and has been in communication with other auto repair business owners regarding filing of CUPs for their businesses. These CUPs will be presented to the Planning Commission as staff completes the analysis. If during this process, staff determines that a property owner is not willing or able to make necessary improvements to meet the requirements, staff would recommend denial of the CUP and if upheld by the Planning Commission, an abatement procedure will be initiated immediately. On the other hand, if improvements can be made to meet the requirements and the owner is willing to make those improvements, staff would recommend approval of the CUP.

Residential Structures

This provision of the zoning ordinance was adopted in 1994 and provided different provisions for residential properties that are constructed with 10 or more units and those that are 9 or less units. Properties with 10 or more units were required to file for a Development Plan Application (DOR) within two years from the adoption of the ordinance. One DOR has been approved by the Planning Commission but few others still need to be filed. The goal for establishing this process was to only retain multi-family developments along the corridor that meet today's acceptable standards for multi-family projects. As the DORs are filed, staff will be reviewing them and presenting them to the Planning Commission. If during this process, staff determines that a property owner is not willing to make necessary improvements to meet the requirements, staff would recommend denial of the DOR and if upheld by the Planning Commission, an abatement procedure will be initiated immediately. On the other hand, if improvements can be made to meet the requirements and the owner is willing to make those improvements, staff would recommend approving the DOR.



Those complexes with 9 or less units received an amortization period of five years which started from the date that the property was sold subsequent to the adoption of the ordinance. The purpose for this provision was to discourage lower density residential units and provide an unlimited time for the current owners to continue to use their properties. However, if the properties were sold, the new property owners should have been notified by the selling parties regarding the 5 year abatement clause which essentially means the property would have to be abated by the new owners after five years from their date of purchase. As the properties are abated, new commercial or high density units are expected to be built to assist in creating the vision for a vibrant Corridor with high density housing and retail development.

Pole signs

In 2006, the City adopted an ordinance that made all existing pole signs on properties less than 2 acres non-conforming. The abatement period for these pole signs is five years from the adoption of the ordinance. The purpose of this provision is to clean up the existing proliferation of pole signs along the corridor and to assist in creating the pedestrian friendly atmosphere envisioned by the Master Plan. These signs can be replaced with monument signs not exceeding eight feet in height. In the near future, staff will be notifying all property owners regarding the non-conforming status of their pole signs and the requirement for their abatement.

Conclusion

The implementation of the Carson Street Master Plan vision will result in an inviting environment for the existing and future residents and visitors of the City. However, in order to implement this vision, the City needs to commit the necessary funds and resources to complete the various projects mentioned in this report.

III. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

- CONSIDER and DISCUSS the information provided for in this workshop;
- DIRECT staff to provide additional information regarding the Carson Street Master Plan and its implementation programs during future workshops; and
- RECEIVE and FILE.

IV. Exhibits


None.



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