



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION: March 23, 2011
SUBJECT: Continued workshop regarding Section 9138.15 of the Carson Municipal Code to consider allowing auto repair as a primary use in the CA (Commercial Automotive) zone
APPLICANT: City of Carson
REQUEST: Discuss and consider item and provide direction
PROPERTIES INVOLVED: CA (Commercial, Automotive) zone district

COMMISSION ACTION

- Concurred with staff
 Did not concur with staff
 Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

AYE	NO		AYE	NO	
		Chairman Faletogo			Gordon
		Vice-Chair Park			Saenz
		Brimmer			Schaefer
		Diaz			Verrett
		Goolsby			

I. Introduction

This workshop was continued from the March 10, 2011 Planning Commission meeting in order to allow preliminary consideration of development plans for the former Don Kott automotive dealership properties. The proposed development plans are as follows:

- Design Overlay Review (DOR) No. 1398-11, Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 856-11
 - Rick's Lube and Tune proposes a façade remodel of the former Don Kott Jeep automotive dealership building located at 21101 S. Avalon Boulevard, and construction of a new 3-bay drive-thru oil change facility and related parking lot, landscaping and site improvements.
- Design Overlay Review (DOR) No. 1400-11, Conditional Use Permit (CUP) No. 859-11
 - AutoWest Collision Group proposes a façade remodel and related landscaping, parking area, extensive interior improvements, and general site improvements to the former Don Kott Ford automobile dealership located at 21212 Avalon Boulevard.

II. Background

The purpose of this workshop is to discuss the proposed plans and the future land uses for the subject properties and continue discussion of a potential text amendment to Section 9138.15 of the Carson Municipal Code (CMC) to allow for auto repair in the CA zone as a primary use, subject to a conditional use permit (CUP). Alternatives would include, a no-change option, a limited term option (i.e. six years, etc.), or an option to provide for a standard CUP process pursuant to Section 9172.21 of the CMC. Please refer to the March 10, 2011 Planning Commission staff report for further background.

III. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

- CONSIDER and DISCUSS the information provided for in this workshop; and
- PROVIDE direction to staff in how to proceed.

IV. Exhibits

1. Draft Planning Commission Minutes dated March 10, 2011
2. Development Plans for DOR No. 1398-11 and CUP No. 856-11
3. Development Plans for DOR NO. 1400-11 and CUP No. 859-11

Prepared by: _____

Steven Newberg, AICP, Associate Planner

Reviewed and Approved by: _____

Sheri Repp Loadman, Planning Officer

12. NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION

B) Workshop regarding auto repair use in the CA zone

Applicant's Request:

The applicant, city of Carson, is requesting the Planning Commission discuss and consider the information provided for in this workshop regarding Section 9138.15 of the Carson Municipal Code concerning allowing auto repair as a primary use in the CA (Commercial Automotive) zone with approval of a conditional use permit; provide direction to staff. The properties involved are in the CA (Commercial, Automotive) zoned district.

Vice-Chairman Park asked if a CUP would be required for auto repair use if it's within 100 feet of residential.

Associate Planner Newberg indicated yes, and explained that in this case, staff is suggesting this use is primarily auto repair use with no car sales.

Planning Officer Repp explained that because there are some underutilized properties in this area with limited proposals, staff would support an amendment that would allow short-term auto repair use for the next five or six years; but pointed out that currently, Sonic has an option to extend the lease up to 15 years. She stated that the Planning Commission is to consider whether an ordinance amendment would be appropriate; explained that if the Planning Commission supports a short-term use, specific provisions will be included in the ordinance for that short-term use; and that if the Commission is open to extending that use, it would be subject to a CUP which would provide for the timeframe that use is permitted and/or extended.

Vice-Chair Park stated it is his understanding there are currently 90 car repair businesses in Carson.

Commissioner Goolsby stated that because these buildings are vacant, they create a blighted condition and noted he'd like to see some business on these properties.

Associate Planner Newberg noted that the applicant intends to put an approximate half-million dollar investment into the interior and exterior of this property; and stated that staff believes the applicant's conceptual plans are aesthetically pleasing and appropriate for this site. He added that Rick's Lube and Tune is planning for a drive-through auto lube and tune facility along Avalon Boulevard and that he will also be making some contemporary upgrades to that property.

Commissioner Brimmer stated she would like to see some conceptual drawings.

Planning Officer Repp explained that the Commission should first consider whether an auto repair use should be permitted in this zone, whether it would be a short-term use or eligible for a longer term; and stated that standards can be developed either way that will best serve all parties involved.

Vice-Chairman Park noted his concern that the former Jeep property abuts the mobile home park and that the noise from the air tools may negatively impact those residents.

Commissioner Saenz noted that the economy could turn around within the next couple of years, stating that 10 to 15 years is a long time to tie up these properties with an automotive repair use.

Commissioner Gordon asked what other concepts have been suggested for these properties.

Planning Officer Repp explained that the site is constrained because of the land lease which runs for another six years; advised that there have been several developers interested in this property, proposing such projects as a large single retail use, mixed use with restaurants, and noted that new auto dealerships might come back; and she pointed out that no one would redevelop the property with a six-year land lease.

Commissioner Diaz stated that he would support auto use for a short term rather than see these properties sit vacant, believing their investment into the properties should be predicated on that short-term understanding.

Rick Nickel, Rick's Lube and Tune, stated that the 76 gas station he is currently operating out of does not have ample room for his business; reminded the Commission of the City's relocation of his business a year and a half ago; and noted the importance of getting onto a site that can adequately fulfill his business needs/operations. He noted his intent to put a new façade on this building; advised that all work will be done inside the facility; and stated that he is willing to buy more expensive and quieter tools to lessen the noise, pointing out that they do not use a lot of air tools. He expressed his belief there is more noise being generated from the freeway next door than what will be generated from his business operations.

Alexander Astts, Auto West Collision Group, noted that this company has been in business for over 20 years, working on high-end collision repairs; advised that they are certified to work on most makes/models of vehicles; and stated they typically work with the dealerships. He added that they would be willing to open a new car franchise on this site to get an extended lease. He pointed out that approximately 90 percent of the high-end cars they work on are no older than five years; added that the majority of their sites are in Northern California, such as San Jose, Oakland, Fremont; and stated they are interested in bringing three new locations to Southern California, which they're proposing to be located in Carson, Monrovia, and Beverly Hills.

Napoleon Garcia, spray booth contractor, noted that his company manufactures spray booths for Southern California collision centers; that due to the poor economy, his company expanded into the Bay area where collision business seems to be much stronger; noted his support for the Auto West Collision Group; and advised that Auto West Collision Group typically locates their facilities in prime areas and that they cater to dealerships, such as Sonic. He added that the work is done inside the building.

Commissioner Schaefer expressed her belief that five or six years is not a short time period, questioning a business's decision to invest a lot of money into a property they only will be occupying for that five- or six-year term.

Planning Officer Repp noted that the Commission has three options to consider: change nothing, which means the auto repair will not be a permitted use; direct staff to draft an ordinance amendment to allow only a short-term auto repair use for six years; or draft the ordinance to allow short-term use with the option for an extension to 15 years. She highlighted staff's concern with this land sitting vacant for another six years, reiterating that staff would support this proposed use.

Commissioner Goolsby noted his support for drafting an ordinance amendment for the auto repair business and allowing an extension to 15 years.

Commissioner Diaz reiterated his support for only short-term auto repair use, with no possibility of an extension.

Commissioner Brimmer asked staff to come back with other options for the short term; questioned whether Sonic has asked to be let out of this lease; and reiterated her request to see some conceptual plans.

Planning Officer Repp stated if the Commission wishes to continue this workshop, the applicant should be able to provide preliminary plans for this site. She noted that amending the ordinance will also impact other CA zones.