



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

WORKSHOP: July 25, 2006

SUBJECT: Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan

APPLICANT: City of Carson

REQUEST: Workshop to discuss and make comments on the Carson Street Mixed-Use Master Plan

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

COMMISSION ACTION

☐ Concurred with staff

☐ Did not concur with staff

☐ Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

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

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.

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. Three community meetings were held in 2003 and 2004 with hundreds of residents participating. Various visioning discussions and a community preference survey provided significant community input and support for the revitalization of the Carson Street corridor. Modifications and refinements were incorporated throughout this process. The proposed Master Plan consists of the following:

- A survey of the Master Plan area evaluating existing built conditions, policy, and market conditions, identifying assets and challenges.
- A development concept and strategy that builds on the vision for the Carson Street corridor established in prior planning studies, community meetings, and input from key stakeholders.
- Design standards and guidelines for private development and public improvements intended to establish parameters within which the aesthetic character of the Carson Street Corridor can be defined.
- An assessment of revitalization tools for funding proposed public improvements and recommended development strategies for implementation.

III. Analysis

Existing Conditions

Assets:

- Some significant buildings
- Existing retail activity and community uses
- Access to public transportation
- Cultural diversity

Challenges:

- An inhospitable pedestrian environment
- Underutilized land
- Increasing traffic
- Challenging economics

Guiding Principles

Vision

The vision of the Carson Street Mixed-Use 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.”

Goals and Objectives

- Create a beautiful and 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.

Districts

The Master Plan envisions the creation of five distinct “districts” that focus on critical nodes of activity and are linked consistent street landscaping. The proposed districts are:

- The “East Gateway District” adjacent to the I-405 San Diego Freeway.
- “West Gateway District” at the I-110 Harbor Freeway.
- “Boulevard Residential District” midway between the two freeways near the Grace Street intersection.
- “Downtown District” near the civic core centered on the Avalon Boulevard intersection
- “Community Serving Shopping District” centered on the Main Street intersection.

Residential First

Residential development is an important component of a strong “main street” economy. A residential population creates an extended cycle of activity, provides a ready market for retail uses, and establishes a lobby for quality public service and infrastructure. The Master Plan recommends the residential development be given first priority.

Compactness and Intensity of Retail Uses

To promote pedestrian activity and vitality on the Carson Street corridor, the Downtown District should be compact and walkable. The compactness will concentrate uses to create a critical mass of activity over a broad area.

Early Victories

A key strategy to implement the various components of the Mixed-Use District Master Plan is to establish early victories. These will provide the momentum during a multi-year period over which public improvements can be shaped and implemented. City and Redevelopment staff have been working with a number of property owners and developers to explore potential development opportunities. Some of the efforts have not resulted in development proposals but others appear to have opportunity. It is important that the development proposals are consistent with the long term goals for the Carson Street corridor. The following projects are under consideration by the Redevelopment Agency. Subject to receipt of applications, these projects will be presented to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation:

Newmark Merrill –Southwest Corner of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard

Preliminary plans have been submitted by Newmark Merrill for the rehabilitation of the existing Ralph's and Carl's Jr. Newmark Merrill also proposes to build two additional commercial buildings and a drug store. One is proposed west of the existing Ralph's and contains 13,260 square feet and the other is proposed to be built on the west side of the property parallel to Avalon Boulevard and contain 10,138 square feet. A drug store fronting on Carson Street on the west side of the property, containing 14,390 square feet, is also proposed on this site. Redevelopment Agency and city staff are currently exploring the feasibility of this project.

Acevedo/MWH – South side of Carson Street, West of the Newmark Merrill Project

An application is under review for an 82 unit residential condominium project at a density of 16 units per acre. There will be up to 8 live/work units, all of which will be 3 bedrooms. The other 74 units will consist of 45 three bedroom units and 29 four bedroom units.

Safran Project – Southeast corner of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard

Preliminary plans have been submitted for a mixed-use project with 24,200 square feet of retail and restaurant development and a senior community center on the first floor. Levels 2, 3 and 4 will consist of up to 105 affordable rental senior units, and up to 150 for sale residential condominiums. The project will replace existing commercial and residential buildings from the street corner to the property currently occupied by Las Palmas Hardware.

Myles Project – 333 W. Carson Street

Preliminary plans have been submitted for a 3, 181 square foot retail building replacing the former bar and real estate office located on the subject property. The initial plans place the new building at the rear of the property with the parking located

between the street and new building. Staff has requested that the plans be redesigned to orient the building adjacent to the street with parking located to the rear.

Victoria Homes – 401 – 437 East Carson Street

Preliminary plans were submitted in 2005 for the development of 98 condominiums on a 2.8 acre parcel. The proposed development mirrored the recommendations of the Master Plan for the combined development of the subject properties. The design included a 4 story building with 8 live-work units facing Carson Street. The Redevelopment Agency is currently considering the potential for selling the Agency owned properties to the applicant, who owns one of the properties to be assembled. The financial feasibility of the project is in question due to the appraised value of the properties to be sold and the increasing construction costs for the podium style building.

General Plan

The General Plan currently designates the majority of the property within the Carson Street Mixed Use Master Plan area as MUR (Mixed Use – Residential). The Planning Commission should review the current General Plan designation for Carson Street to determine if any boundary adjustments are necessary. Initially, the opportunity for mixed-use or residential development was not considered for the properties located east of Avalon Boulevard. However, with the interest expressed by Tom Safran & Associates, staff believes that the opportunity for mixed-use at the southeast corner of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard would be complimentary to the overall goals for the Carson Street corridor. Therefore, the General Plan Land Use Map and Element would have to be changed from General Commercial to Mixed-Use on the southeast corner of Carson Street and Avalon Boulevard to allow for the Safran Project.

Zoning Ordinance

Currently the Mixed-Use District is an Overlay District with the commercial zones being the underlying zone. This allowed all of the Commercial General and Commercial Regional uses to be permitted and development standards to be used unless specifically prohibited or changed. Under the new ordinance, the Mixed-Use District-Carson Street will become the zone for the property. Only the uses and standards described in this zone will apply to the Carson Street Mixed-Use District.

Development Standards and Guidelines

The development standards proposed in the Master Plan will become part of the zoning ordinance for the Carson Street Corridor. An ordinance proposing a Mixed Use District-Carson Street will be brought back to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation in August. The guidelines will also be part of this ordinance but guidelines are not mandatory like zoning codes. The Planning Commission and City Council will be encouraged to follow the guidelines when

reviewing development proposals. The following are changes that will be proposed in the ordinance for Mixed-Use Development- Carson Street:

Topic	Existing Code	Proposed Code	Comments
Permitted Uses	Multi-family residential; Residential (CUP) Condominiums (CUP); Mixed-use (Residential/commercial) (CUP) ; All uses in Section 9131.1 except as regulated or prohibited by Section 9131.13	Multi-family Residential; Residential Condominiums; Mixed-use (Residential/commercial); Retail sales, services, studios, offices, food sales, vehicles sales and repair; vehicle rental and leasing, communication and utilities, education, recreation, religious and public assembly, public use, health services, day care, live/work.	Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Multi-family Residential; Residential Condominiums and Mixed-Use (residential/commercial); CUP required for drive-through establishments and assembly uses.
Prohibited Uses	In mixed-use structures: Animal Services, Arcades, Bowling alley as a primary use, drive-in establishment, driving skills course, Indoor mini-mart or auction house, Public Assembly Uses, Sexually oriented business establishments, Vehicle sales and Service	Animal services, arcade, bowling alley as a primary use, drive-in establishments, driving skills course, indoor mini-mart or auction house, sexually oriented businesses, vehicle sales and services, public assembly for recreational facilities, drive-through and fast food restaurants. In live/work units, the ground floor space fronting the main entrance shall not be used for sleeping purposes.	
Site Requirements			
Lot Area	Commercial Development – no requirements	Commercial Development – 20,000 sq. ft. minimum	
Lot Width	Min 100 ft. for mixed-use or residential	100 ft. for mixed-use residential	
Lot depth	None.	200 ft.	
Building Frontage	None	Minimum building frontage to be 70% of lot width;	

		Building frontage not to exceed 150 feet per segment	
Site open space	Private open space 130 sq. ft. for 0 and 1-bedroom units; 150 sq. ft. for all others; Recreational facilities – 15% of gross residential floor area for private recreational space, 60% of the total space shall be open to sky.	15% of gross residential floor area for private recreational space, 60 % of the total space shall be open to the sky.	
Density	None	35 du/acre for market rate residential; Affordable transit oriented development or senior housing may have higher density subject to review	
Building Height	Min. – None Max. – 3 stories 45 ft. for market rate housing; Affordable and senior housing 4 stories 55 ft.	Min. 18 ft. Max. – 4 stories 55 ft. for mixed-use and residential development; 4 stories 55 ft. for affordable or senior housing; 30 ft. for commercial development	
Front Yard	1 st Floor- Commercial 10 ft. 2 nd Floor-Commercial 10 ft. 1 st Floor – Residential 20 ft. Residential – 20 ft. 3 rd Floor – 20 ft. 4 th Floor – 30 ft. On grade parking or partial subterranean garage 10 ft. Subterranean garage 1 inch	1 st Floor Commercial/Live/Work -10 ft. 2 nd Floor Commercial - 10 ft. 1 st Floor Residential - 10 ft. 2 nd Floor Residential - 10 ft. 3 rd Floor Residential - 10 ft. 4 th Floor Residential - 10 ft. On grade or partial subterranean garage 10 ft. Subterranean Garage 1 inch	
Rear Yard	1 st Floor – Commercial 10 ft. 2 nd Floor – Commercial 10 ft. 1 st Floor Residential – 15 ft. 2 nd Floor Residential – 15	1 st Floor Commercial/Live/Work -10 Ft. 2 nd Floor Commercial - 10 ft. 1 st Floor Residential - 15 ft. 2 nd Floor Residential - 15 ft.	

	ft. 3 rd Floor 30 ft. 4 th Floor 30 ft. On grade or partially subterranean garage 1 inch or 3 ft. Subterranean garage 1 inch	3 rd Floor Residential - 30 ft. 4 th Floor Residential - 30 ft. On grade or partial subterranean garage 1 inch Subterranean garage 1 inch	
Side Yard	1 st Floor Residential 10 ft. 1 st or 2 nd Floor Commercial Interior 1 inch or 3 ft., street side 10 ft. On grade or partial subterranean parking garage Interior 1 inch or 3 ft., street side 10 ft. Subterranean Garage 1 inch	1 st Floor Residential 10 ft. 1 st or 2 nd Floor Commercial Interior 1 inch or 3 ft., street side 10 ft. On grade or partial subterranean parking garage Interior 1 inch or 3 ft. Subterranean Garage 1 inch	
Allowable Projections	Allowed in front yard subject to approval of the Planning Commission ; Affordable housing – 5 ft. front yard encroachment allowed	10 ft. into front yard for ground floor arcades subject to review. 5 ft. for ground floor awnings and canopies. 5 ft. for upper level balconies. Affordable housing – Subject to review.	
Sub-area Setback Exceptions East Gateway Sub-area West Gateway Sub-area		15 ft. setback for 1 st and 2 nd floors (all new development) 15 ft. setback for 1 st and 2 nd floors (all new development)	
Off Street Parking		Live/work uses shall require 1½ parking spaces per unit for units under 2500 sq. ft. Larger units require 1 space for residential plus the number of spaces required for commercial activities.	

Public Improvements

Streetscape Guidelines

Public improvements proposed for Carson Street include an improved streetscape. The overall streetscape concept is:

- Distinguish Carson from its neighbors, create a sense of place unique to Carson Street and reinforce the role of the various commercial districts and nodes along the boulevard.
- Use some streetscape elements along the entire boulevard to unify and reinforce the overall identity of Carson Street, as well as that of Carson.
- Vary other improvements by district to reinforce district identity and to support economic development efforts within each district.

Community Priorities

At a series of community workshops, community members expressed their preferences for streetscape and open space improvements for Carson Street. The following list reflects those preferences and identifies a recommended order of implementation:

- 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.
- Plant street trees in large tree wells with irrigation.
- Install Duratherm (or approved equivalent decorative material) crosswalks with a unique pattern developed for Carson Street at all intersections.
- Install pedestrian-scale street lights.
- Refurbish and replant landscaped medians.
- Install landscaped tree wells or parkways – property owners or Business Improvement District.
- Develop plazas and pocket parks.

- Incorporate public art into the above improvements.

Funding Sources and Revitalization Tools

Several funding sources are available for public improvements on the Carson Street Corridor. Initially, the city and the Redevelopment Agency had identified the availability of the funding of public improvements through redevelopment agency funds as well as funding from the commercial rehabilitation or façade improvement program. Additional sources of funds are available for the acquisition of land along Carson Street.

The City's commercial rehabilitation program can complement new development opportunities by creating a consistent image that meets design guidelines for existing buildings along the Carson Street Corridor.

Long Term Sources

The public source funds that appear to be the most likely to remain available despite current budget crises include the following:

- Redevelopment Property Tax Increment Funds
- Federal Community Development Block Grant Funds
- Local Public Works Grants
- Workforce Investment Act Grants

Additional information about these programs is in the Master Plan.

Other Revitalization Tools

A variety of revitalization tools and financing techniques may be utilized in a targeted manner for improvements along the Carson Street Corridor. The following may provide opportunities for multi-year support for aggressive redevelopment:

- Tax Increment Financing Bonds
- U.S. HUD Section 108 Grant Technique
- Urban Development Action Grant
- Revenue Reimbursement Agreements
- Private Property Redevelopment

Additional information about these programs is in the Master Plan.

Potential Funding for Maintenance

Property based Business Improvement Districts (PBIDs) are based upon "benefit assessment district" concept, which provides for an assessment on commercial property to be raised within a geographic district with proceeds directed back to the district to provide services that benefit it. The key provisions include:

- A wide range of service options
- Governed by those who pay, encouraging private sector management

- Requires petition support from private property owners paying more than 50% of the proposed private property assessments.
- Requires caps on assessments and a 5-year life for a district, requiring a new petition process to renew.

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 is being prepared to determine if there are any impacts which may not have been anticipated in the General Plan EIR. If there are, the Initial Study and Negative Declaration will be presented to the Planning Commission when the ordinance for zoning code changes and resolution to adopt the Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan and General Plan amendment are scheduled for Commission recommendation.

V. Conclusion

This workshop is intended to allow the Planning Commission to make comments on the draft Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan and give staff direction. The Carson Street Mixed-Use District Master Plan, General Plan Amendment and Ordinance to amend the zoning code will come back to the Planning Commission in August for a formal recommendation. The finalization of the Carson Mixed-Use District Master Plan is important to compile the vision, goals and objectives for Carson Street and to establish an implementation roadmap to guide future decisions. There is tremendous opportunity to transform Carson Street. The success will depend on the commitment to attract and support quality projects and to identify the necessary funding sources to assist in making the necessary public and private investments.

VI. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission open the workshop, take public comments and provide direction.

VII. Exhibits

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