

MINUTES

CITY OF CARSON ADJOURNED REGULAR MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CARSON CITY HALL

701 East Carson Street, Second Floor
Carson, CA 90745

December 15, 2011 – 6:30 P.M.

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Chairman Faleto go called the meeting to order at 6:40 P.M.
 2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Chairman Faleto go led the Salute to the Flag.
 3. **ROLL CALL**
Planning Commissioners Present: Brimmer, Diaz, Faleto go, Goolsby, Gordon, Schaefer, Saenz, Verrett, Williams

Planning Staff Present: Planning Officer Repp, City Attorney Wynder, Senior Planner Naaseh, Principal Civil Engineer Abolfathi, Traffic Engineer Garland, Recording Secretary Bothe
 4. **AGENDA POSTING CERTIFICATION** Recording Secretary Bothe indicated that all parking requirements had been met.
 5. **AGENDA APPROVAL** Commissioner Saenz moved, seconded by Vice-Chairman Gordon, to approve the Agenda as submitted. Motion carried, 9-0.
 6. **INSTRUCTIONS TO WITNESSES** Chairman Faleto go requested that all persons wishing to provide testimony stand for the oath, complete the general information card at the podium, and submit it to the secretary for recordation.
 7. **SWEARING OF WITNESSES** None
 8. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS** For items **NOT** on the agenda. Speakers are limited to three minutes. 1) Mayor Dear thanked the Planning Commission for their efforts. He noted that the Carson Street Improvement Plan will be going before City Council for final approval.
 9. **CONSENT CALENDAR** None.
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10. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING None.

11. PUBLIC HEARING

A) Carson Street Improvements

Applicant's Request:

The city of Carson and Carson Redevelopment Agency are requesting the Planning Commission approve the Carson Street Improvement Project. The properties involved are from Carson Street right-of-way between I-405 and I-110.

Senior Planner Naaseh presented staff report and the recommendation for the Planning Commission to APPROVE the Carson Street improvement plans; and WAIVE further reading and ADOPT Resolution No. 11-____, entitled, "A Resolution of the Planning Commission of the city of Carson recommending approval by the Carson City Council the Carson Street Improvement Project for the segment between I-110 and I-405."

Commissioner Brimmer noted her concerns with the long-term maintenance plans for these improvements; stated she'd like to see more green/sustainable plans for this corridor, such as with lighting; and commented on her concerns with security plans for the long term.

Dean Howell, project consultant, advised that because this area has heavy clay soil and can't be easily infiltrated, they are recommending flow-through planters; and stated that solar powered lighting had not been considered.

Steve Smith, project consultant, advised that they are looking at alternative street lighting, but explained that for economical reasons, some of the existing lighting will be maintained. He added that they are looking at LED lighting to make it more pedestrian friendly; and he noted that drought-tolerant plants will be used, noting these plants will not need a lot of maintenance.

Planning Officer Repp explained there has been strong focus on the long-term maintenance of these plans, making sure they don't become over-burdensome to maintain for the long term. She noted that there have been numerous public/community and joint/interactive Commission meetings for input on the plans for this corridor; that she believes all the issues have been addressed; and noted that there may need to be some slight refinement in design selections depending on how long this project will eventually take to go forward.

Commissioner Diaz commented on the many meetings he has participated in wherein this matter has been thoroughly discussed, noting there have been many opportunities for input; and stated that it needs to go forward at this point.

In response to Commissioner Schaefer's inquiry regarding the parking alongside of planter areas, Mr. Howell explained that there will be enough room for people to get in and out of their cars without walking on the landscaped areas and irrigation equipment.

Commissioner Williams stated that he trusts the professionals in their work with the plans and stated that he is more concerned with start up and completion.

Commissioner Brimmer pointed out this will be a destination place that will see more people visiting this city; and stated that she wants to make sure everything has been addressed. She asked for input on what the plans are for the crosswalk materials.

Mr. Howell explained that the crosswalks will be concrete that have a scored color hardener, noting the color should last as long as the concrete.

Mr. Smith stated that because Carson Street is heavily traveled, it needs a durable surface that will last; and stated that the materials they are looking at have a 30- to 40-year lifespan.

Commissioner Brimmer stated she'd like a more attractive plan for the freeway underpass, suggesting a more artistic approach to its design. She suggested an art contest with the City's high schools.

Mr. Smith advised that they have visited with Caltrans to talk about ideas for the underpass, which vary from ceiling murals to architectural spotlights; and noted that because Caltrans is concerned with maintenance and seismic concerns, they will not approve any change to the underpasses. He commented on some pleasing laser-cut screens that have interesting patterns as one option; and stated they'd like to be able to do something interesting to this area.

Commissioner Brimmer stated she'd like to make sure the lighting is pedestrian friendly and that the lighting be inviting to those who want to walk in the evenings along this street and that the lighting be safe for senior citizens walking this corridor.

Mr. Smith stated that the proposed plan increases the lighting, noting that currently, there is very little lighting on this street; noted that this plan adds all new lights and maintains some of the current lights for economical reasons, stating it will be essential to increase the lighting for safety and visibility and to increase the charm of walking down this corridor; and he explained that the lights will be directed downward on the sidewalks and seating areas.

Senior Planner Naaseh commented on the discussions they've had with regard to installing security cameras on the new lights, noting that City Council is starting to address a citywide wireless security system in its infrastructure which will be connected to the Sheriff's station, but noted that is not part of this project. He confirmed that maintenance issues have been at the top of their priority list from the very beginning, that everything must be low maintenance and must last a long time. He highlighted the various professional trades they have sought for this project. He noted that some of these changes will impact private property owners, noting that some of them are present this evening; and advised that staff has addressed their concerns and made some changes following their input. He commented on the various stakeholders meetings with the residents, business owners, Commissions, City Council, and major land owners; and reiterated that all the consultants have provided their input throughout this process and discussed various options for the most optimal result.

Senior Planner Naaseh explained that some of the median strips are being proposed for closure, which will increase the street landscaping; and noted that some of those turn movements were deemed unsafe; and stated that once the notices went out, staff did receive a few calls from impacted property owners, such as Carson Gardens, Nuway

Mobilehome Park, Lucky China, Ralphs, and CityView. He noted that the left-turn median opening at the Carson Gardens site is proposed to close because it's considered an unsafe movement, along with the one into the EastWest Bank. He stated that another median proposed for closure is the one at the PC Warehouse site. He advised that the representatives for Nuway Mobilehome Park have expressed their concerns with the proposed closure, and that staff has since made a decision to leave that median open. He stated that because the median across from the Lucky China restaurant is a short turn and only serves the Lucky China business, staff is proposing a closure of that median.

Planning Officer Repp stated that the median across from Lucky China is not considered a safe turn pocket; she explained that there will be 19 driveways removed to create some continuity with the sidewalks; and mentioned that 16 out of 19 driveways are obsolete and lead into vacant properties. She noted that Del Liquor has 3 driveways too close to the intersection and are considered unsafe, but explained that this will require some modifications to the onsite circulation; and she noted the property owner would like the City to help him pay for the improvements, which the City is willing to do.

Planning Officer Repp noted that the project will be done in phases and will depend on funding, estimating this project will cost almost \$11 million; she commented on the state's plans for the potential closing down of the redevelopment agencies statewide; and stated that other funding grants may become available for this project if the redevelopment agencies are no longer in existence. She stated she is hopeful these plans will go out to bid by March or April next year if the funding is available.

Betty Sweeney, onsite manager at Nuway Mobilehome Park, asked that their median opening stay as it currently is.

John Sykes, resident, stated he did not receive all the notifications that were highlighted this evening; expressed his opinion that actual traffic counters should have been placed on this street to get an accurate count of traffic numbers; stated that if the median strip by the Nuway Mobilehome Park is closed, it will create a traffic hazard because everyone will be sent to the intersection to make U-turns, noting there is too much traffic on this street to safely make U-turns; and noted his concern with increasing landscaped planter areas and decreasing parking availability.

Senior Planner Naaseh highlighted the numerous mailings and advertisements that have gone out for each of the meetings.

Planning Officer Repp added that staff went beyond the basic noticing requirements for the various meetings.

Dan Williams, resident, stated that Carson Gardens is a resident-owned park; and expressed his concern with losing this median access to this park. He expressed his belief it will create a traffic backup for those seeking to make a U-turn at Figueroa Street.

Harry Pairs, 401 West Carson, Nuway Mobile Home Park, noted his opposition to closing the median near this park.

Brad Pearl, co-owner of the Ralphs shopping center, noted his support for the Carson Street project; and addressed his concern with the proposed closure of the median on Carson Street which provides access into the Ralphs shopping center. He advised that each tenant in the Ralphs shopping center is struggling in this economy; and expressed his belief that if this access point is closed, it will negatively impact all these businesses. He advised that Ralphs has a reciprocal access agreement and that it is of paramount importance to maintain, noting there is language in the lease stating that they can back out of their lease if this access point is lost at any time; and he mentioned that this Ralphs is not a profitable store. He stated that this left-turn access getting onto the property is more important than the egress. He also stated that forcing vehicles to turn right out of the east driveway and make a U-turn on Avalon Boulevard is not safe; and suggested adding another signal light at this area. He stated that adding tall landscaping may impact the visibility of the signage at this shopping center; and noted he is not in support of any future assessment district fees, noting this would be burdensome on their tenants and the shopping center in an already difficult economy.

Planning Officer Repp explained that the driveway will not be closed; that vehicles will still be able to make the right turn onto the property; and that just shortly beyond that point will be the new signalized intersection where cars will be able to make a brief U-turn to come back to this shopping center.

Traffic Engineer Garland explained that because of the proposed changes to this street, it will no longer be safe to maintain this opening into the shopping center, noting the new signalized intersection will be less than 100 feet away from CityView's main entrance. He explained that ideally, the new CityView project and the Ralph's shopping center would have a shared entrance with a signalized intersection and all would have taken advantage of that left-turn signal, but noted there was resistance to that plan; and now the design for this development is to have a traffic signal with a left-turn pocket and arrow. He stated there should be 150 feet from the left-turn pocket to the new signalized intersection and that there should be 400 feet between median openings. In this case, he stated it would only be 100 feet, which is considered a substandard design and possibly create safety and operational problems. He stated that they are taking this opportunity to correct those deficiencies and pointed out that the traffic on Carson Street is expected to increase. He stated that if the street medians are designed properly, staff does not expect any bottlenecks; and that this street will be able to handle all the left turns and U-turns.

Vice-Chairman Gordon questioned how the traffic is tested and studied for future improvements.

Traffic Engineer Garland stated that a traffic study and count were performed at these locations for future design modifications, called traffic modeling, which determined the design could accommodate the extra traffic; and that the traffic study indicates the proposed plans will work. He stated this was done with the most updated traffic study technology/science of traffic modeling and is the best program traffic engineering has to work with today. He advised that the traffic modeling is performed every 6 months and is ongoing throughout Carson. He expressed his belief the traffic volume is expected to rise on Carson Street by 15 to 20 percent as the development goes forward.

Planning Officer Repp advised that the general plan update included a lot of projecting, identified potential problems and looked at the general plan and land use pattern, which came up with a format for Carson Street, preserving as much parking as feasible.

Mr. Pearl suggested one long median with a left-turn pocket, which would provide all the stacking needed; and stated that his traffic engineer believes the 150-foot minimum mentioned by Traffic Engineer Garland is not necessary.

Traffic Engineer Garland explained that the ideal plan would be for CityView and the Ralphs shopping center to share a single access at the new signalized intersection.

Vice-Chairman Gordon noted his experience that turning into the Ralphs shopping center from Avalon Boulevard can be dangerous at times and that it's difficult getting back out onto Avalon Boulevard from this center.

Steve Roberts, Community Dynamics, representing CityView, stated the project was designed to line up the driveway/entry of this new development with the new signalized intersection; and he expressed his opinion that the 150-foot left-turn pocket that's been referenced, while it's a rule of thumb, it's more than what is needed in this case. He stated that they have submitted plans to provide two left-turn pockets -- one at the easement driveway and one at the primary entrance driveway to the new development, both providing more than what is necessary for left-turn stacking. He stated the easement driveway condition will be improved from its existing condition; and mentioned that from the most recent data, there have been no accidents associated with that movement.

Jenny Fu, owner of Lucky China, noted her opposition to closing the median entrance into her parking lot, stating that her business will decrease because potential customers coming westbound will just continue to go on down Carson Street to the next Chinese restaurant, noting there are other Chinese restaurants down the roadway less than a mile away. She stated that she attempted to make a U-turn where staff is proposing, but noted that she did not feel it was safe making that U-turn at Orrick Avenue. She stated there have been no accidents with this median opening and that it rarely, if ever, has more than two cars waiting to turn into her parking lot from that median.

Ron Arbeleta, owner of 424 Carson Street, stated that staff is proposing to close two driveways into his property and eliminate some of his onsite parking, approximately 6 to 7 parking spaces, and increasing 2 parking spots in front of his building. He stated the only access into the property will be off Ravenna Avenue. He noted his concern that he must have a certain number of parking spaces for his business and questioned if this change will cause him any problems in the future by increasing the street to 3 lanes and losing all his street parking. He also commented on his concerns that large trees will block the business signage.

Planning Officer Repp explained that the current parking situation on this site is a safety issue and stated that staff is trying to preserve the on-street parking; and noted that the goal is to facilitate the businesses currently on Carson Street as well as the proposed new development and trying to replace as much parking as they can on the street.

Commissioner Verrett moved to accept staff's recommendation, with the exception of the Ralph's shopping center median opening, and stated that further dialogue needs to

be undertaken with the stakeholders who are opposed to the median and driveway closures. Commissioner Goolsby seconded the motion, in concept.

Planning Officer Repp asked that the Planning Commission refine its motion; stated that if the Commission is looking for specific areas to be reconsidered, those may have to be taken out of the plan and not approved at this time.

Commissioner Goolsby withdrew his second on the motion.

Commissioner Brimmer expressed her belief there are too many issues that need further attention and that she does not feel comfortable making a final decision this evening.

Commissioner Diaz asked staff if anything can be worked out with the concerns over the Ralphs property.

Traffic Engineer Garland stated that he would have to defer to City Engineer Rollinger to make the ultimate decision to leave that left-turn pocket as is; and explained that in staff's discussions with the representatives of these properties, the City Engineer has not been willing to compromise the design as proposed because the traffic modeling indicates the proposed plan is the optimal and safest design. He noted that City Engineer Rollinger did review the other consultant's traffic study.

Chairman Faletogo stated that he is not comfortable making a decision this evening because of the concerns addressed by the speakers on the closing of the medians/driveways to their properties and their concerns with how it will impact their businesses; and stated he'd like to know from staff if their concerns can be alleviated in some manner, especially with the Ralphs property and the concerns with the owner of the Carson/Ravenna property. He noted his concern with losing parking for this business. He asked that staff bring this item back and address whether these concerns can be mutually agreed upon.

Commissioner Verrett stated that her motion still stands, stating she'd like staff to undertake further dialogue with the businesses along Carson Street for both markets.

Commissioner Goolsby seconded the motion.

Chairman Faletogo stated that the motion is too broad, questioning what the details are for the exceptions.

Vice-Chairman Gordon stated it is his understanding there is consensus to approve staff recommendation with the exception of closing the medians/driveways for Ralphs, Lucky China and the mobilehome park.

Planning Officer Repp suggested keeping the public hearing open and continuing this matter to another Planning Commission meeting; she questioned whether the Commission is in concurrence with the design details, such as the bus benches, lighting, landscaping; and stated that the medians/driveways can be further addressed at another meeting.

Commissioner Williams expressed his belief this plan can be approved in concept, noting that things usually change just before construction starts; stated that this Commission is recommending approval of the conceptual drawings, noting this is not even at the schematic drawing phase. He stated the Commission should approve this conceptual plan and send it forward to City Council where it is going to be vetted again and staff will need to address their recommendations for closing the medians/driveways before City Council if there is any opposition before the City Council; and reiterated he would like to approve this project in concept and move it forward to City Council where the final decision will be made.

By way of a substitute motion, Commissioner Williams moved to approve this project in concept and move it forward to City Council. Commissioner Diaz seconded this motion. (This motion was ultimately withdrawn.)

Commissioner Verrett stated she agrees with the conceptual plans but reiterated her desire to see the concerns with the medians and driveways resolved before sending it to City Council.

Commissioner Brimmer noted her preference to continue this matter to another Planning Commission meeting, directing staff to work out the concerns with the Ralphs and the mobilehome park. She added that there has not been enough community outreach and that she is concerned with long-term maintenance issues.

Commissioner Williams amended his motion to include that staff be directed to speak to all of the audience members who voiced their concerns this evening regarding the closing of the driveways/medians; and that staff speak with each of the property owners and/or businesses at the locations where their driveways/medians are being affected.

Vice-Chairman Gordon expressed his belief that staff has already communicated these issues with those affected and addressed their concerns; and stated that this should be returned after a second look at relocating the CityView signal light to be used by both the new development and the Ralphs shopping center. He suggested that the City Engineer take another look at these issues and provide alternatives.

Planning Officer Repp suggested the Commission direct staff to continue to work with the various stakeholders and continue this public hearing to the January 10th meeting.

Commissioner Brimmer asked that more outreach be undertaken.

Commissioner Williams moved to reopen this public hearing and continue this hearing to the January 10, 2012, Planning Commission meeting. There was no objection.

Planning Officer Repp stated she understands the Commission is in agreement with the conceptual plans as presented; and that the Commission is seeking further clarification on the closures of the driveways, medians, and on-street parking, and noted that staff will make every attempt to contact the affected property owners.

12. NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION None

13. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS None

14. MANAGER'S REPORT

Planning Officer Repp wished everyone a happy holiday season and reminded the Commission its next meeting will be January 10, 2012.

15. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commissioner Verrett invited everyone to the Apollo West Christmas Happenings event at the Community Center on December 18th at 3:00 P.M., urging everyone to bring an unwrapped toy.

Commissioner Goolsby wished everyone a happy holiday season and new year.

Chairman Faletogo thanked the Commission and staff for a job well done this year; and he wished everyone a safe and happy holiday season. He noted he will not be in attendance at any of the Planning Commission's January meetings due to a work conflict.

16. ADJOURNMENT

At 10:30 P.M. the meeting was adjourned to Tuesday, January 10, 2012, 6:30 P.M., City Council Chambers.

Chairman

Attest By:

Secretary