



# CITY OF CARSON

## PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

PUBLIC HEARING: February 12, 2008  
SUBJECT: Design Overlay Review No. 991-07  
APPLICANT: Bethel Baptist Church (Rudy Abrot, Pastor)  
25100 Normandie Avenue  
Harbor City, CA 90710  
REQUEST: Construction of an 8,623 square-foot, two-story church building with a parking lot and landscaping improvements on a currently vacant, 18,000-square-foot lot located in the CG-D (Commercial, General – Design Overlay) zone and within Redevelopment Project Area No. 4.  
PROPERTY INVOLVED: 1361 E. Carson Street

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### 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

**Item No. \_\_\_\_\_**

## I. Introduction

On March 8, 2007, an application was submitted for the development of a new 6,900 square-foot, two-story church building. The plan included a proposed shared parking arrangement with a neighboring property to the east of the subject site. The applicant submitted a revised plan on December 5, 2007 after receiving staff's comments. The revised plan (Exhibit No. 1) includes a larger church building of 8,623 square feet and provides the required number of parking spaces onsite which eliminates the need for shared parking (see *Issues of Concern: Parking* for further details). Details of the project are described below. This application includes the following discretionary permit:

- Design Overlay Review No. 991-07 – Construction of a new church building.

## II. Background

The subject property is located at the northwestern corner of the intersection of Carson and Vera Streets. The property is 18,071 square feet (0.41 acre), zoned CG-D (Commercial, General – Design Overlay), and located within Redevelopment Project Area No. 4. The site is currently vacant and undeveloped.

### *Surrounding Area*

The subject site is located adjacent to one- and two-story, single-family residential homes to the north zoned RS (Residential, Single-Family). Across Vera Street, to the east of the subject site are more one and two-story, single-family residential homes zoned RM-25 (Residential, Multi-Family – 25 units per acre). Toward the south, across Carson Street, is the Vera-Carson Mobile Home Park, zoned RM-25. To the west, adjacent to the subject site, is a small, commercial retail center consisting of approximately six tenants, zoned CG-D. The tenants include a Laundromat, restaurant, clothing store, and a liquor store (see *Issues of Concern: Liquor Store* for details). The zoning designations are consistent with the General Plan Land Use designations.

## III. Analysis

### Design Overlay Review No. 991-07

The development plans include a new 8,623-square-foot, two-story church building located toward the north of the subject property. The ground floor occupies a 3,072-square-foot area along the northeast side of the property, with the second floor occupying 5,551 square feet, and extending above and across the northwest portion of the site. The proposed use is for church services, a Sunday school, Pastor and administrative offices, and a fellowship hall. A trash and recycling area enclosure is proposed to be located in a niche at the rear of the building, accessible from Carson Street, along a paved area lining the north side of the building. A total of 38 parking spaces are proposed for the site, with the closest two to the building designated as parking for the disabled. A 10-foot high by 6-foot wide monument sign is proposed for the southeastern corner of the subject site.

*Findings: Design Overlay Review*

Pursuant to CMC section 9172.23, Site Plan and Design Review, the Planning Commission may approve the development plans for the proposed church building 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.*

The subject property is zoned CG-D and has a General Plan Land Use designation of GC (General, Commercial), which is consistent with the zoning designation. The proposed use is permitted within the zone. Surrounding uses include single-family and high-density residential, as well as commercial, retail uses. The subject property has only two adjacent neighbors, which include the multi-tenant commercial strip center to the west, and the single-family residential homes to the north. The subject property abuts the backyards of the homes and an approximately 30-foot separation will be provided between the church building and the homes. A new 6-foot high, concrete-masonry unit block wall and landscaping are proposed along the north property line to further buffer the homes. This is sufficient to provide adequate screening, noise dampening, and protection for the residences to the north. As such, the proposed use is compatible with the General Plan and surrounding uses. There is no specific plan for the area.

- 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.*

The architecture of the proposed development features a front-gable entrance facing Carson Street, which extends from the two-story section at the rear of the building. The façade of the entrance resembles an Ionic Order, consisting of faux, pre-cast concrete ribbed columns supporting a gabled roof structure lined with rows of dentils (small, square blocks). The 2<sup>nd</sup> story which hangs over the parking on the west side of the building is supported by similarly fashioned columns. The windows are all double-hung with foam trim and stucco finish. The building is colored a light yellow with stucco finish; beige trim adorns throughout; and the roof consists of brown shingles. A spire extends 42 feet in height, or 14 feet above the entrance roof.

Staff has included a condition of approval to require stamped and colored concrete at the entrance of the site to add aesthetic appeal and interest. A 6-foot high block wall is proposed for the north and west perimeter of the property. Landscaping is proposed for the setback areas and other areas in between the buildings and parking spaces, which covers a total of 2,840 square feet, or 15 percent of the total area of the subject site. Open space accounts for 53 percent of the total area of the site.

The subject property is adjacent to a commercially-zoned property which is compatible with the proposed use. The scale and appearance of the structure,

as well as the large percentage of open space on the property contribute to a harmonious and attractive development of the area.

c). *Convenience and safety for pedestrians and vehicles.*

The subject property is located on a corner lot at the intersection a major and local street. Adequate ingress and egress is accommodated on the site by virtue of the sole, 26-foot wide, driveway which fronts Carson Street. This driveway enables vehicles to maneuver onto westbound Carson Street. A center median with a left turn pocket is located in front of the subject property, which prohibits left turns from the Carson Street driveway. However, a U-turn is possible approximately 150 yards west of the subject property, which will enable drivers to continue east along Carson Street. Staff has verified with the city Traffic Engineer that the proposed monument sign will not obstruct the visibility of oncoming cars along Carson Street, those turning right from Vera Street, or those which may be exiting from the subject property (or adjacent commercial property to the west).

Parking spaces are located along the south and west property lines and at the south and west areas of the building (also underneath the western overhang). Pedestrians accessing the church from the public right-of-way can either follow the same path as those that come from the parking area along the west side of the property, or can follow the distinct concrete path of travel stemming from the west property line along Vera Street.

d). *Attractiveness, effectiveness, and restraint in signing, graphics, and color.*

The façade of the main building is decorative and aesthetically pleasing, with a neutral, earth-tone stucco and window treatments. The perimeter wall features a color and finish complimentary to the church building. The monument sign is colored and textured to match the style of the building's front elevation. The use of contemporary materials and limited numbers of colors contribute to an attractive, restrained, and effective graphic, color, and sign presentation.

e). *Development scheduling (if phased development) which will satisfy the above criteria in each phase.*

There is no phased development plan for the proposed project.

f). *Conformance to any applicable design standards and guidelines which have been adopted pursuant to Section 9172.15. Such design standards and guidelines may be generally applicable or may specify different requirements for different areas.*

The project is in conformance with applicable regulations, standards, and other criteria found in the zoning code.

*Issue of Concern: Parking*

The applicant's initial development plans included a smaller church building with a different configuration and larger sanctuary area. That plan provided insufficient parking spaces, which necessitated a shared parking arrangement with the Kidney Bank, a neighboring property approximately 300-feet to the west of the subject property. The applicant could not secure the appropriate terms of the parking arrangement, which included a clause for the shared spaces to be provided in perpetuity in the event that the kidney bank expanded on their use, or otherwise impacted the existing parking layout on their property. Thus, the applicant revised the development plans with the current configuration, which included modifications to the floor plan by making the sanctuary area smaller, increasing the number of parking spaces onsite by allowing parking underneath the second floor of the building on the west side of the property, and rearranging the landscaped areas. The current proposal provides a sufficient number of parking spaces onsite in a way that is safe and convenient for automobiles and pedestrians.

MITIGATION: None.

*Issue of Concern: Liquor Store*

A liquor store is currently operating in the small retail commercial center to the west of the subject site. Once complete, the west edge of the church building (which is elevated above the parking) will be approximately 45-feet from the entrance of the liquor store. However, the entrance to the fellowship hall of the church, which is located on the east side of the subject property will be located approximately 130-feet from the liquor store entrance. A question of zoning compliance was asked by an adjacent residential neighbor as to whether or not a church use was allowed next to a liquor store. Carson Municipal Code (CMC), Section 9138.5, Alcoholic Beverage Sales and Services, has a requirement stating that no off-site sales of alcoholic beverages shall be allowed to be established within 300-feet of any school, park, church or single-family zoned property, as measured from lot line to lot line. The existing liquor store is currently considered nonconforming with respect to this code section, as it is located within 300-feet of single-family residential. The church use is considered a permitted use within the CG-D zone, but does not have the same distancing requirement or restrictions on use that the liquor store has. Furthermore, the church's existence will not cause the existing liquor store to become anymore non-conforming, as it is already considered as such. The liquor store use is allowed to continue at its current location until such time that it closes and/or ceases to operate for a period of six months without a business license.

MITIGATION: None.

*Issue of Concern: Adjacent Neighbor's Concerns*

A residential property owner adjacent to the subject property submitted a correspondence to staff which noted specific concerns with the proposed development, which included the following:

- a). Construction noise and related activity;
- b). Noise level after church is construction and in operation (choir, etc.);
- c). Loitering, specifically of congregation members after church services;
- d). Church use next to a liquor store;
- e). Traffic control and pollution from cars;
- f). [Residential] Property value impacts.

Staff addresses these issues as follows:

- a). CMC Section 4101(J), Unnecessary Noises, limits the work hours involved in construction of new buildings from 7a-6p, Monday through Friday only. Construction activities related to new buildings are not permitted on the weekends. Grading and related pre-construction activities are limited to the same hours and are regulated by specific requirements mandated by the Building and Safety Division's approval of a grading plan.
- b). The noise from the church building, once complete, is not anticipated to be above that of any other typical commercial use which would otherwise be located on the subject site. The sanctuary area and fellowship halls, which would most likely create the most noise, are both located toward the front of the building on the first floor. Typical construction methods involve (and the building code requires) insulation and sound attenuation materials which will help to dampen the sounds emanating from these areas. The rear of the building is a solid wall with only one window for the bathroom on the first floor, facing the adjacent residential properties to the north. Staff feels that this is more than sufficient mitigation for potential noise impacts from the proposed use.
- c). Church activities will be conducted within the building. The fellowship hall is reserved for members to congregate and converse before and after church services. Loitering of church members is not anticipated to be of issue.
- d). Staff has addressed this issue in the *Issues of Concern: Liquor Store* section above.
- e). Staff has addressed traffic issues in the *Findings: Design Overlay Review* section above.
- f). Staff cannot speculate on potential property value impacts to the residential properties adjacent to the subject site as a result of the proposed development.

**IV. Environmental Review**

Upon evaluation of the possible environmental impacts resulting from the proposed development, staff has deemed the project Categorically Exempt, pursuant to California Environmental Quality Act guidelines, Section 15332, In-Fill Development Projects.

**V. Conclusion**

This project will provide amenities to the community, clean up and improve an otherwise vacant and underutilized site, offer safety and protection for vehicles and pedestrians visiting the site, and will not cause undue health effects on nearby residents resulting from the proposed use.

**VI. Recommendation**

That the Planning Commission:

- **APPROVE** the Categorical Exemption;
- **APPROVE** Design Overlay Review No. 991-07; 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. 991-07 for the construction of two-story church building with related parking lot and landscaping improvements located at 1361 E. Carson Street."

**VII. Exhibits**

1. Site Plan, Floor Plan, Elevations (under separate cover)
2. Land Use Map
3. Resolution

**Prepared by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Reviewed by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Sheri Repp-Loadsman, Planning Division Manager