



CITY OF CARSON

PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

NEW BUSINESS DISCUSSION: January 22, 2013
 SUBJECT: Workshop to discuss Flexible Zoning Standards, East Carson Street Case Study
 APPLICANT: City of Carson
 REQUEST: Discuss and consider flexible zoning standards, review East Carson Street Case Study to consider a Parking Overlay District to allow a reduction in required number of parking spaces within this District if property owners are proposing significant improvements to their properties
 PROPERTIES INVOLVED: Citywide

COMMISSION ACTION

- Concurred with staff
- Did not concur with staff
- Other

COMMISSIONERS' VOTE

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

I. Introduction

The eastern section of Carson Street between Alameda Street and Santa Fe Avenue is a neighborhood serving commercial district providing a small grocery, retail businesses, personal services, churches and restaurants. The area has seen limited changes in the design and appearance of the commercial buildings since originally being developed primarily in the 1940's through 1960's. There have been periodic efforts to explore ways to improve the area by focusing on street improvements and rehabilitation of the businesses. Some properties have recent improvements but most are in need of some level of rehabilitation.

The purpose of this workshop is to evaluate a specific portion of the commercial district to see what steps might be effective in creating positive change, encouraging private investment and improving the safety of the street for both pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles. The East Carson Street Case Study is an effort by both staff and the property owners to see if there might be a more creative and flexible way to accomplish shared goals to improve the area.

History of Zoning

Zoning allows a local government to control and regulate the uses and characteristics of buildings, structures, and land within its boundaries. The authority for zoning is broadly based on a community's police power, allowing for the protection of the public's health, safety, and general welfare.

The traditional zoning code most frequently found in communities around the country is the "Euclidean" code, so named because it is derived from the Village of Euclid, Ohio's regulations, reviewed and upheld in the landmark 1926 Supreme Court case. Euclidean zoning is typically based on a system of zoning districts, lists of uses associated with each zoning district, and dimensional standards such as minimum lot size, minimum setbacks, and maximum height.

In Euclidean zoning, building contrary to the uses and standards outlined in the code is prohibited. Assuming the standards of the code are met, a project would generally be approved.

Most current city zoning codes, including Carson's, are based on the Euclidean model. The primary advantage of the Euclidean approach is its logical presentation of districts, uses, and standards, a form that is widely familiar to professionals, public officials, and the public. The one major disadvantage of the Euclidean ordinance can be its lack of flexibility to address the particulars of a site and its surroundings.

For example, zoning standards such as setbacks and parking requirements are rigid requirements adopted citywide. Deviations from these rigid requirements require approval of Variance that necessitates making certain findings which are often difficult to make. In some cases, findings can be made but repeated requests for a Variance, in some cases multiple Variances, in the same



geographic area may hint that the rigid zoning standards are not the best tool to use. There are a number of tools available to planners to make zoning more flexible such as ordinance amendments to establish updated standards, overlay zones, planned development zones, performance based zoning, and incentive based zoning.

Challenges Created by Existing Zoning Development Standards

In a mostly developed city like Carson, we need to consider zoning and development requirements that may hinder upgrading and rehabilitating existing structures, sites or areas. There is certainly strong justification for having established standards for setbacks, building heights, parking and other site development standards. There are also benefits to the community and the property owners to be able to rehabilitate properties that were built in some cases over 30-70 years ago. Questions or difficulties sometimes come to play when the strict application of the code makes rehabilitation efforts more difficult or, in some cases, impossible.

It is evident that some flexibility may be desired in our zoning code. However, there is a fine balance between rigid requirements and flexibility. Too much flexibility can oftentimes lead to results that were not intended or anticipated. This staff report presents a case study to assist staff and the Commission to decide whether flexible zoning standards are appropriate for the eastern commercial area on Carson Street.

East Carson Street Case Study

Identifying the Project and Issues

This case study includes three commercial properties at the northwest corner of Carson Street and Santa Fe Avenue. Frontier Burger and Dominguez Pizza are located two separate lots but have the same property owner. Dela Liquor and the donut shop/Chinese food business (take-out restaurant only) are two separate businesses but with one property owner. Both property owners are proposing to expand the size of their building by adding on to the existing structure. The following table provides a summary of the parking for the three properties:



	Existing Parking	Current Required Parking	Current Excess or Shortage of Parking	Proposed Required Parking	Proposed Excess or Shortage of Parking
Dela Liquor/Donut Shop	18	12	+6	14	+4
Frontier Burger	21	29	-8	35	-14
Dominguez Pizza	5	14	-9	14	-9
Total	44	55	-11	63	-19

As it can be seen from the table, Frontier Burger and Dominguez Pizza are currently under parked by 17 spaces and would have a greater parking deficiency with the proposed expansion of the Frontier Burger. On the other hand, Dela Liquor currently enjoys a surplus of 6 spaces and will still enjoy a surplus of 4 spaces after their proposed addition is taken into account. However, approximately half of Dela Liquor's parking spaces and all of Dominguez Pizza's parking spaces are considered unsafe since they have substandard drive aisles that result in cars backing up into the street creating traffic hazards for cars, pedestrians, and bicycles. This conflict is increased due to the opening of the new high school. It should be noted that the rest of this commercial strip, which extends from Santa Fe Avenue to Harbor View Street, suffers from the same unsafe parking spaces backing up into the street.

Safety Solutions

First and foremost, it is staff's goal to create a safer environment for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. Dela Liquor has restriped the parking stalls that back up to the street from 90 degrees to approximately 45 degrees. Dominguez Pizza still has 90 degree parking stalls. This design actually has reduced the number of parking spaces since 90 degree parking stalls always yield more parking spaces than 45 degree stalls. Currently, there is little or no sidewalk since there is large continuous driveway to accommodate the vehicles backing out of the parking spaces. The angled parking spaces will allow the cars to maneuver within the parking lot without backing into the sidewalk and the street. The large continuous driveway would be reduced to two small driveways preventing backing up into the street from the parking lots. In addition, to provide added protection, staff is suggesting that a continuous two foot planter with six inch curbs be included to prevent the cars from backing into the sidewalk. A reciprocal access agreement would be necessary between the Dela Liquor/Donut shop and Dominguez pizza to allow sharing parking spaces and access.



Zoning Flexibility Solutions

Overlay districts are often provided to impose additional criteria on properties, such as a single-story height limitation, a flood protection zone, or a pedestrian-oriented district. The district requirements are usually overlaid on a specific geographic area, but can also be "floating zones", applied only to specific properties to impose further restrictions or to allow added flexibility. Typically, the overlay is noted as a suffix to the underlying use district.

The City of Carson's zoning code includes seven overlay districts that were created to accomplish different purposes including Blimp Port (BP), Cemetery (CEM), College (COL), Design Overlay (D), Electronic Marquee Signage (EMS), Mixed-Use Residential (MUR), and Organic Refuse Landfill (ORL). The explanations for these over districts are included in Exhibit 1.

The primary advantage of overlay and combining districts is to allow the community the flexibility to impose specific requirements for area-specific or site specific needs. The primary disadvantage is that too many districts may result from this approach, and it can be difficult to identify all relevant requirements for a particular site. Overlay districts, however, have now become a relatively standard zoning tool within the overall Euclidean framework of most cities' zoning ordinances.

This overlay district would provide the flexibility needed within the zoning code to reduce the required number of parking spaces. This flexibility would only be provided to properties that make substantial improvements to their properties. These improvements may include but is not limited to façade and landscape improvements, elimination of pole signs, new wall mounted signs, parking lot lighting, and public art or other urban design enhancements. In addition, it would have to be demonstrated that the reduction in number of parking space would still allow the reasonable level of parking spaces for the project.

II. Conclusion

The Planning Commission should discuss the need for more flexible parking and development standards provided by a potential Parking Overlay District in the east Carson Street area. These standards would allow a reduction of required number of parking spaces for existing developments if the property owner provides significant improvements to the property.

III. Recommendation

That the Planning Commission:

- CONSIDER and DISCUSS the information provided for in this workshop;
- DIRECT staff to proceed with an ordinance amendment with certain standards and requirements discussed at this meeting.

IV. Exhibits

1.Overlay Districts, Section 9113.2 Overlay Districts


Prepared by:

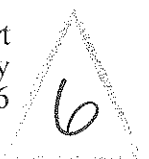

Saied Naaseh, Associate Planner

Reviewed by:


John F. Signo, AICP, Senior Planner

Approved by:


Sheri Repp Loadsmann, Planning Officer



Division 3. Zoning Classifications

9113.1 Names and Purposes of Zones.

The following zoning districts are hereby established, with their general purposes as indicated:

Residential Zones

RS – Residential, Single-Family. This zone is created for the establishment, expansion and preservation of residential areas which are to be developed with single-family detached dwellings and such other activities considered harmonious with such low density residential development.

RM – Residential, Multiple Dwelling. This zone is created for the establishment, expansion and preservation of residential areas which are to be developed with multiple dwellings or combinations of single-family and multiple dwellings, and such other activities considered harmonious with such medium and high density residential development.

RA – Residential Agricultural. This zone is created for single-family residential uses together with compatible crop cultivation and related agricultural activities on land which is not yet fully utilized for residential purposes.

Commercial Zones

CN – Commercial, Neighborhood Center. This zone is created primarily for convenience retail shopping facilities to serve surrounding neighborhoods. Characteristically, each center is anchored by a grocery store with small retail service shops and professional offices.

CR – Commercial, Regional Center. This zone is created primarily for a major center, with its peripheral areas, which serves a community or subregional area and offers a full range of retail merchandise and services.

CG – Commercial, General. This zone is created primarily to provide areas for all types of commercial activities not grouped in commercial centers.

CA – Commercial, Automotive. This zone is created primarily to maximize and group retail sales of new automobiles at dealerships and promote the development of an auto sales district with consistent and appealing landscaping, lighting, signage and compatible architectural elements.

MU-CS – Mixed-Use – Carson Street. This zone is created primarily to create a downtown retail and residential district which will provide a distinctive core area along Carson Street which includes the Civic Center. This designation provides for pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use (commercial/residential) development which may include market rate, affordable or senior housing and transit-oriented development.

MU-SB – Mixed-Use – Sepulveda Boulevard. This zone is created primarily to create a retail, office and residential district along the south side of Sepulveda Boulevard two hundred forty (240) feet east of Marbella Avenue and four hundred (400) feet west of Avalon Street. This designation provides for mixed-use (commercial/ residential) development which may include market rate, affordable or senior housing development, residential or commercial development.



The lots are very shallow in this area which makes conventional development difficult. The purpose of this zone is to create the flexibility needed to develop a vibrant residential/commercial corridor.

Industrial Zones

ML – Manufacturing, Light. This zone is created primarily for small and medium size industrial uses which are not likely to have adverse effects upon each other or upon neighboring residential and commercial zones.

MH – Manufacturing, Heavy. This zone is created primarily for the full range of industrial uses which are acceptable within the community as a whole, with provisions for controlling any adverse effects upon the more sensitive areas of the City.

Open Space Zone and Special Uses

OS – Open Space. This zone is created for the enhancement, expansion and protection of large outdoor recreation areas, natural resource areas, ecological preserves and land subject to special hazards which make such land unsuitable for buildings.

SU – Special Use. This classification is created primarily in order to provide for special zone designations with appropriate regulations for certain large or unique land uses which have a major impact upon the surrounding community and which could not have been reasonably anticipated in the zoning pattern. (Ord. 03-1279, § 1; 06-1363, § 9; Ord. 07-1392, § 9)

9113.2 Overlay Districts.

The following special designations are hereby created and may be combined by notation on the Zoning Map with any of the zoning districts listed in CMC 9113.1 in order to accomplish additional purposes within such designated areas:

BP – Blimp Port. This designation is created to provide for the development and operation of blimp ports. Properties within this designation will be required to meet certain site requirements and development standards.

CEM – Cemetery. This designation is created to provide for the development and operation of cemeteries and related uses. Properties within this designation will be required to meet certain development standards that provide for adequate setbacks, screening, parking, landscaping, and signage.

COL – College. This designation is created to provide for the development of higher education institutions that may include classrooms, administrative offices, and accessory uses. Site development standards will not be required for properties preempted under state law. All academic uses will be regulated under the rules and regulations of the Board of Trustees of the California State University and Colleges, California State Department of Finance, California Public Works Board, Office of the State Fire Marshal and Office of the State Architect.

D – Design Overlay. This designation is created primarily to provide for Site Plan and Design Review of future development within the designated areas in order to achieve special standards of design, architectural quality, style and compatibility, landscape treatment, and functional integration of neighboring developments.

EMS – Electronic Marquee Signage. This designation is created to provide for the development and operation of two (2) freeway-oriented electronic marquee signs for outdoor



advertising purposes, one (1) on a 91 Freeway-adjacent commercial zone parcel and one (1) on a 405 Freeway-adjacent commercial zone parcel. The only parcels eligible for this designation shall be those four (4) parcels identified and considered in connection with the April 2001 National Training Center Environmental Impact Report (State Clearinghouse Number 2000101041) certified by the Board of Trustees of the California State University and College System.

MUR – Mixed-Use Residential. This designation is created to provide for pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use (commercial/residential) development, and high density residential development which may include market rate, affordable or senior housing, within designated areas in commercial zones.

ORL – Organic Refuse Landfill. This designation is created to provide for the public health, safety and general welfare by regulating uses of organic refuse landfill sites and ensuring that proper mitigation measures are taken to eliminate or minimize hazards to persons and property and environmental risks associated with such sites including, but not limited to, toxicity, fire, explosion and subsidence. (Ord. 94-1039, § 1; Ord. 02-1245, § 1; Ord. 11-1479, § 1)

9113.3 Density Designations.

Where a number appears on the zoning map in combination with the symbol for a residential zone, such number indicates the permitted density of development as provided in CMC 9124. (Ord. 78-449)

This page of the Carson Municipal Code is current through Ordinance 12-1488, passed June 6, 2012.

Disclaimer: The City Clerk's Office has the official version of the Carson Municipal Code. Users should contact the City Clerk's Office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

This version of the code combines the 2005 code with all the changes to the code through the above-mentioned ordinance.

City Website: <http://ci.carson.ca.us/>
Telephone number: (310) 952-1700
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