



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

333 WEST OCEAN BOULEVARD

LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA 90802

(562) 570-6194

FAX (562) 570-6068

JUNE 2, 2011

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve an Administrative Use Permit and Site Plan Review and certify a Mitigated Negative Declaration for a new 4,296-square-foot automated carwash and a 9,121-square-foot retail building that will partially reuse a historically significant structure located at 4201 East Willow Street within the Regional Highway District (CHW) zone. (District 5)

APPLICANT: Long Beach Gateway, LLC
20675 S. Western Avenue
Suite 200
Torrance, CA 90501
(Application No. 0909-21)

DISCUSSION

The subject property is located on the northwest corner of Willow Street and Lakewood Boulevard immediately south of the 405 Freeway (Exhibit A – Location Map) and has a zoning designation of Regional Highway District (CHW). The CHW zone is a commercial use district for mixed scale commercial uses located along major arterial streets and regional traffic corridors.

The site is improved with an auto dealership that was built in 1963 in a Googie architectural style for the Ray Vines Chrysler Plymouth dealership. It was last occupied by the Cal Worthington Ford dealership. The Googie architectural style, characterized by sharp angular rooflines and dramatic roof overhangs, is unique in Long Beach with the dealership being one of the last remaining examples of the style after the Java Lanes Bowling Alley was demolished approximately five years ago. In addition to the characteristic Googie elements, the structures on site feature a distinctive concrete block, known as shadow block, as part of its construction, which has a raised geometric shape projecting from the face of the block. There is also a compatibly designed pole sign oriented toward the street.

The applicant's original proposal for the site was to completely remove the existing dealership and build an automated carwash on the Lakewood Boulevard street frontage and a one-story retail strip center along the interior side property line. However, after a

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS

June 2, 2011

Page 2 of 3

Historic Resources Assessment of the site was conducted by the applicant and peer-reviewed by the City, it was determined that the dealership is a historical resource as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). In response to the historic significance of the existing structure, the applicant revised the plans to reuse a portion of the existing showroom and maintain the original pole sign.

The proposed project consists of two components: a 9,121-square-foot retail building that reuses the Ray Vines showroom and a new 140-foot-long, 4,296-square-foot automated car wash (Exhibit B – Plans and Photographs). The car wash, located approximately 25 feet away from the west side property line, will be constructed of concrete shadow block and will feature an angled roof on the southern elevation to reflect the Googie architecture of the dealership showroom. In addition to the use of the shadow block, the carwash exterior will also feature steel panels and glazing that activates the carwash allowing the interior machinations to be viewed from the exterior.

A study session was held at the Planning Commission meeting in November 2010. Comments and concerns raised during the study session focused on the scale of the project, the layout of the parking stalls for the vacuum area at the carwash, landscaping, and the west elevation of the retail building. The revised plan that is the subject of this report addresses many of the concerns raised during that study session, but does not increase the scale of the project.

The revised plan calls for the removal of the majority of the buildings on site, including the service and parts department, but preserves the showroom of the car dealership as the anchor of the retail building. The distinctive shadow blocks that constitute the skin of the buildings to be demolished will be salvaged and reused for the new portions of the retail building and carwash. If there are not enough salvaged blocks to construct the carwash and retail building, the applicant has identified a contemporary block that matches to finish the construction so that the shadow blocks are used throughout the site.

To help mitigate noise generated from the carwash, there will be no openings on the west side of the carwash tunnel, the blower equipment will have a sound-insulated wall and ceiling, an additional 20-foot tunnel will be constructed beyond the location of the blower, and the 14 vacuum stations will be located on the east side of the carwash.

In addition to reusing the Googie showroom of the former dealership, the entire west wall of that building will be preserved for the retail building. The new storefront entries face Lakewood Boulevard and utilize modern commercial storefront glazing and metal awnings that are compatible with the shadow block and Googie elements being preserved. The west wall will feature panels with historic photographs paying tribute to the Ray Vines dealership to enhance this elevation. Parking will be located around the building and between the building and the street. The site design was driven by the reuse of the showroom and providing parking along the street frontages is consistent with an automobile-oriented zone and also speaks to the past use of the dealership.

A minimum six-foot landscape buffer around the perimeter of the site will provide a separation between the parking lot and the public right-of-way. In addition to the

landscaped perimeter with 36 trees proposed, the landscape plan calls for 11 street trees, 15 trees located in the parking lot areas, and 38 trees in other yard areas with over 200 shrubs planted within the project area as well as groundcover. A planter will also be installed between the carwash and retail building that will provide a division of uses on the site and define the primary entrance to the site. The addition of landscaping will greatly enhance the site and positively contribute to the streetscape of this major intersection. Irrigation for the landscaping will be provided by reclaimed water from the carwash.

The original pole sign with its Google elements will be preserved and used for the project. It will be relocated from its present location and moved to the west side of the driveway off of Willow Street in a 22-foot-wide landscape area. A sign program will be required for the project to ensure that the carwash and retail signage is consistent among tenants and appropriate given the distinctive characteristics of the Google architecture being preserved.

Staff recommends approval of the Administrative Use Permit to operate a car wash in the CHW zone Site Plan Review for the new construction and certification of the Mitigated Negative Declaration, subject to the Conditions of Approval (Exhibit C – Conditions of Approval and Findings).

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Public hearing notices were distributed on May 16, 2011; no responses have been received as of the preparation of this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act, a Mitigated Negative Declaration (ND-08-10) was prepared for the proposed project (Exhibit D – Mitigated Negative Declaration). The document was available for public review and comment from April 19, 2011, to May 18, 2011. Community comments and staff responses will be included in the final environmental document.

Respectfully submitted,



AMY J. BODEK, AICP
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

AJB:DB:AZ

Attachments: Exhibit A – Location Map
Exhibit B – Plans & Photographs
Exhibit C – Conditions of Approval and Findings
Exhibit D – Mitigated Negative Declaration (ND-08-10)