



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

AGENDA SECTION	PUBLIC HEARINGS
MEETING DATE	JULY 7, 2026

ITEM:	Conditional Use Permit and Final Site Plan Approval for a Car Wash at 47 th and Central Ave		
Presenting Item: Ursula Brandt, City Planner			
DEPARTMENT: Community Development		BY/DATE: Ursula Brandt, City Planner, 7/2/2026	
CORE CITY STRATEGIES: <i>(please indicate areas that apply by adding an "X" in front of the selected text below)</i>			
X Community that Grows with Purpose and Equity		_ Engaged, Effective and Forward-Thinking	
_ High Quality Public Spaces		_ Resilient and Prosperous Economy	
_ Safe, Accessible and Built for Everyone		_ Inclusive and Connected Community	

CASE NUMBER: 2026-PZ06

APPLICANT: Kimley-Horn & Associates on behalf of Crew Car Wash

DEVELOPMENT: Crew Car Wash

LOCATION: 47th and Central Ave. Anticipated address of 4707 Central Ave. (PID: 25-30-24-32-0182)

REQUEST: Conditional Use Permit for Car Wash and Site Plan Approval

BACKGROUND

In 2003 the subject property along with parcels to the north and east were rezoned to Mixed Use District, with the purpose to promote development and redevelopment by allowing the mix of at least two different uses and providing flexibility on bulk requirements. The site was previously occupied by a Kmart shopping Center. Also in 2003, the first site plan was reviewed and approved for a residential portion of the district resulting in the development of Grand Central Commons which consists of Grand Central Flats, Lofts and Townhomes.

In 2008, the Planning Commission reviewed and approved a commercial development consisting of office and commercial space, along with a parking ramp. In 2018, a Hy-Vee convenience store/gas station was proposed and approved for the site. However, none of the approved site plans for the commercial portion of the mixed-use district have been developed.

CURRENT STATUS

The applicant met with the City in May of 2026 to review the requirements to locate a Car Wash on the subject property at the corner of 47th Avenue and Central Ave. Staff relayed the requirements, including the Public Hearing and the Sound Study to the applicant who submitted their proposal for the Crew Car Wash in June of 2026.

ZONING ORDINANCE

The Zoning Ordinance requires the Planning Commission to hold a Public Hearing on the application for the Conditional Use Permit and submit its recommendation to the City Council. The subject property is zoned MXD (Mixed-Use District) in a planned development that consisted of Grand Central Flats, Lofts and Townhomes. The subject property and the property to the north are the last undeveloped parcels in the Mixed-Use District. The Zoning Ordinance 9.112 specifies that Mixed-Use developments shall contain at least two of the following three land use categories: Residential Uses, Commercial Uses or Institutional Uses. The district currently only has residential uses in the forms of townhomes, condominiums and apartments. Therefore, the last undeveloped parcels must be either commercial or institutional uses. A car wash is a permitted, with a conditional use permit, commercial use in the Zoning Ordinance and is subject to Specific Development Standards 9.107(10) for a car wash. The proposed site plan, as conditioned, shall meet the following specific development standards:

- (a) Water from the Car Wash shall not drain across any sidewalk or into any public right-of-way;
- (b) Vacuum facilities shall be located in an enclosed structure or located at least 50 feet from any residential property line to avoid noise impacts.
- (c) The premises, all adjacent streets, sidewalks and alleys, and all sidewalks and alleys within 100 feet of the use shall be inspected regularly for the purpose of removing litter found thereon.
- (d) A sound study is required to determine the overall impact upon the surrounding properties and ensure compliance with performance standards and MPCA sound requirements.
- (e) All new car washes must be located on a minimum of one acre of land.

The proposed site plan shows 12 parking spaces and seven (7) stacking spaces in four (4) lanes for a total queue length of twenty-eight (28) total vehicles at the entrance. The proposed plans show all drainage will be handled on site, but it will be conditioned that there shall be no drainage across any sidewalk or into any public right-of-way. The vacuum facilities are located at a distance significantly above the required 50 ft away from residential property. As sound study was submitted and specifies multiple mitigation techniques that will be used to meet the MPCA sound requirements at all sound points (see Performance Standards). The lot is 1.2305 Acres which is above the required 1 acre.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides the subject site as "Commercial" as well as the area to the north and Residential (medium and high density respectively) to the east and south. The City of Hilltop lies to the west. A Conditional Use Permit to allow for a Car Wash is consistent with the goals and intent of the Comprehensive Plan.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT REVIEW***Findings of Fact***

- a) The use is one of the conditional uses listed for the zoning district in which the property is located, or is a substantially similar use as determined by the Zoning Administrator.
This is correct. A Car Wash is a permitted, with a conditional use permit, commercial use in the Mixed Use District as code states 9.112 (D)(2) "All permitted, conditional, and permitted accessory commercial uses identified in 9.110, Commercial Districts, which are consistent with the comprehensive plan shall be treated as potentially allowable uses within the Mixed Use District".
- b) The use is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the comprehensive plan.
The City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan guides the subject site as "Commercial" as well as the area to the north and Residential (medium and high density respectively) to the east and south. The City of Hilltop lies to the west. A Conditional Use Permit to allow for a Car Wash is consistent with the goals and intent of the Comprehensive Plan.
- c) The use will not impose hazards or disturbing influences on neighboring properties.
As conditioned, the proposed use will not impose hazards or disturbing influences on neighboring properties as it has addressed sound, stormwater and traffic concerns.
- d) The use will not substantially diminish the use of property in the immediate vicinity.
The site is located on a main throughfare with other commercial uses and multifamily residential. As conditioned, the proposed use is not expected to negatively impact properties in the immediate vicinity.
- e) The use will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the appearance of the existing or intended character of the surrounding area.
The proposed car wash is located within the Highway District as designated in the City's Design Guidelines. As conditioned, the proposed use and site plan will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in compliance with the design guidelines and therefore the intended character of the surrounding area.
- f) The use and property upon which the use is located are adequately served by essential public facilities and services.
The proposed property is surrounded by fully developed parcels allowing for adequate access to public utilities along with police and fire services. As conditioned the site will have adequate grading and stormwater management on-site.

- g) Adequate measures have been or will be taken to minimize traffic congestion on the public streets and to provide for appropriate on-site circulation of traffic.

The proposed site design includes 4 lanes of 7 stacking spaces which holds 28 spaces for vehicles waiting to enter the car wash, while the requirement is only 4 stacking spaces. This is an abundance of off-street stacking spaces that will ease the congestion on the street for those entering the space. There is a two-lane drive aisle that leads to and from the vacuums allowing for adequate flow within the site.

- h) The use will not cause a negative cumulative effect, when considered in conjunction with the cumulative effect of other uses in the immediate vicinity.

As conditioned, the proposed car wash use is not expected to have a negative impact on the immediate vicinity as sound, traffic and stormwater have considered and mitigated where applicable.

- i) The use complies with all other applicable regulations for the district in which it is located.

In review of all the application materials and the proposed use being located within a Mixed Use District, which allows for flexibility, it has been determined the proposed use meets all applicable regulations for the district including the Zoning Ordinance and Design Guidelines.

SITE PLAN REVIEW

1. Access

Two accesses to the site are proposed from the south via 47th Avenue NE, a 60 ft wide public right of way with a road width of 45 ft back of curb to back of curb, through a 40 ft driveway to the east with directional marking for vehicles entering the car wash and directing to the stacking lanes. There is also a 30 ft driveway to the west with directional markings for vehicles exiting the site.

2. Off-Street Parking

Supply Requirements. The submitted site plan illustrates a total of 12 off-street parking stalls. The Zoning Ordinance requires two (2) spaces per bay plus four (4) stacking spaces for the one (1) car wash bay including one (1) stacking space at the exit. The Zoning Ordinance also specifies that employee parking is only required when the parking requirements are based on employee counts, as such, the parking requirements for car washes are determined by the number of service bays and stacking spaces, not employee counts. However, the proposed plans indicate four (4) employee designated parking stalls. Appropriately, one off-street parking spaces on the site has been designated as a disability stall (in accordance with the American Disability Act) along with an access aisle striped with "No Parking". The proposed site plan has more off-street parking than required and has accounted for employee parking needs.

Use	Ratio	Required Parking Stalls	Provided Parking
Car Wash	Two (2) parking spaces per bay	2	12 (+10)
Automobile washing facility– automatic	Four (4) stacking spaces per bay with one (1) space at the bay exit	4 stacking spaces at entrance; 1 stacking space at exit.	4 lanes of 7 stacking spaces at entrance; 2 stacking spaces at exit
Total		2 spaces	12 spaces (+10)

Dimensional Requirements. The proposed off-street parking stalls meet the minimum dimensional requirements of the Ordinance (9 feet in width and 18 feet for stalls which abut a curb) and the provided 24 foot-wide drive aisle is the minimum width required by the Ordinance.

Building, Parking, and Vacuum Area Setbacks. The subject Property is zoned MXD (Mixed Use District) Properties with this zoning designation do not have specific setback or dimensional requirements. This is in order to remain flexible for development proposals. Staff believes the proposal does show reasonable setback, height and dimensional information.

Car washes have specific development standards requiring that the vacuum facilities must be located in an enclosed structure or located 50 feet from any residential property lines. The vacuums meet the specific development standard and are setback an excess of 50 feet from residential property lines to the south and east.

3. Business Hours

It is understood that the car wash is proposing 7AM – 9PM hours of operation, Monday – Sunday, and any vacuum use shall be limited to hours of operation as a condition of approval.

4. Trash Enclosure and Storage

The trash enclosure and storage for this site will be part of the building footprint. The indoor storage area will provide a secure, covered enclosure for landscape and lawn maintenance equipment, snow removal equipment, salt storage and materials for upkeep of the exterior vacuums. Both the trash and storage areas are proposed to be on the southeast corner of the building.

5. Fire Access

The applicant has provided a fire access plan that demonstrates Columbia Heights' fire truck specifics and how the trucks will be able to access the site. The routes are within 150 ft of the entrance and allow the fire trucks to be within 150 ft of all sides of the building.

6. Exterior Lighting

The applicant has provided a lighting plan, including light fixture specifics and a photometric study. The proposed plan and fixtures satisfy the requirements of 9.106 General Development Standards (K) by keeping the footcandles at or below 0.5 at the residential property lines and 3 for the Central Ave property line as well as proposing fixtures that are downcast.

7. Loading Area

The applicant is not proposing any discernable loading areas and the code requirements for off-street loading spaces apply to non-residential uses receiving or distributing materials or merchandise by trucks or similar vehicles and has a gross floor area of 5,000 sq. ft. or more are not applicable to this proposal. The loading area requirements are satisfied per 9.106 General Development Standards (L) (12) as there are no deliveries beyond standard commercial delivery vehicles (UPS, Fed-Ex, and USPS) occurring at the front door.

8. Landscaping – Tree Preservation and Replanting Standards

The applicant meets the Tree Preservation and Replanting Standards in 9.106 General Development Standards (M). All trees that exist on the site are considered volunteer weed trees of undesirable and invasive species and are to be removed with the development. The applicant is required to provide one tree for every 50 feet of street frontage and the property has 446 feet of frontage for a total of nine (9) trees, a minimum of four (4) trees per one acre of lot coverage standards for a total of 13 trees proposed. Additionally, the applicant is proposing landscaping containing native plantings and pollinator friendly habitats for the majority of the trees, shrubs, and grasses used. The City Forester is satisfied with the proposed landscaping plan.

As a condition of approval, the applicant is required to provide a letter of credit or other security as acceptable to the City and shall be deposited with the Zoning Administrator, in an amount equal to 100% of the estimated cost of landscaping and/or screening. The letter of credit or other security as acceptable to the City, or portions thereof, shall be forfeited to maintain and/or replace materials for a period of time to include at least two growing seasons. A portion of the letter of credit or other security as acceptable may be released after one growing season as determined by the Zoning Administrator. The property owner shall be responsible for continued maintenance of landscaping and screening materials to remain in compliance with the requirements of this section. Plant materials that show signs of disease or damage shall be promptly removed and replaced within the next planting season.

9. Building Design

The proposed site is considered part of the Highway District in the City Design Guidelines and is subject to the standards and requirements of that design district. The proposed site plan demonstrates compliance with the design objectives of the Highway District, the building is set back from the street behind a parking lot. The architectural renderings and site plan, as conditioned, show compliance with building configuration, façade and roof

treatments, building equipment, drive-through facilities, landscaping and parking meet the design guidelines. It is conditioned that all windows and doors must also meet the design guidelines to ensure only 50% of the window are opaque. Any proposed signage will be subject to the design standards as a condition of approval.

10. Performance Standards (Sound)

The applicant has provided a Sound Study that analyzed the sound impact that the car wash and vacuum operations will have on the adjacent residential properties and provided mitigations they will use to decrease the sound impact to meet MPCA standards. The applicant is proposing the following mitigation strategies for the vacuums; reduction in the number of vacuums from 10 to 8, placement of the vacuums at the northern extent of the proposed parking lot, vacuum suction will be generated at a single location within the carwash tunnel, vacuum nozzles will be used that have a lower operational noise levels, and an 8 ft by 20 ft brick noise wall will be installed adjacent to the southernmost vacuum unit. The applicant is also proposing the following mitigation strategies to the design of the tunnel; blower units are to be placed inside the tunnel to allow for a 30 ft sound deadening room adjacent to the tunnel exit, (2) 8 ft tall, 10 ft wide roller doors at each end of the tunnel that will be closed whenever the blower units are active.

With the use of the mitigation strategies the Car Wash will meet the MPCA noise standards.

11. Neighborhood Notification

As required, neighborhood notification of the conditional use permit application has been provided to property owners within 350 feet of the subject property and that list of property owners is attached. At the time of this report (July 2, 2026), City Staff has received no comments, written or phone calls.

12. Site Plan Staff Review

Findings of Fact

Section 9.104 (N) of the Zoning Ordinance outlines certain findings of fact that must be met in order for the City to approve a site plan review. The findings are as follows:

- a) The site plan conforms to all applicable requirements of this article.
Upon approval of the Site Plan Review, as conditioned, the proposed site plan will conform to all applicable requirements of City Code 9.106 General Development Standards and 9.107 Specific Development Standards.
- b) The site plan is consistent with the applicable provisions of the city's comprehensive plan.
The use and site plan are consistent with the applicable provisions of the Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan designates this property as a commercial use; a car wash is consistent with a commercial use.

- c) The site plan is consistent with any applicable area plan.
With conditions imposed to ensure compatibility, the site plan will be consistent with the applicable Design Guidelines of the Highway District.
- d) The site plan minimizes any adverse impacts on property in the immediate vicinity and the public right-of-way.
As conditioned, the site plan minimizes any adverse impacts on property in the immediate vicinity and the public right-of-way, by providing sound mitigation as well as on-site storm water management.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Planning Commission recommend approval of the Conditional Use Permit for a Car Wash located at 4707 Central Ave NE.

Staff recommends the Planning Commission approve the Site Plan for 4707 Central Ave NE (PID: 25-30-24-32-0182) subject to the following conditions:

1. The Site Plan approval is contingent upon approval of the Conditional Use Permit per resolution 2026-042.
2. The building and site plans adhere to the building and site plans dated July 1, 2026 as conditioned.
3. Building windows and door must meet requirements for the Highway District in the City's Design Guidelines.
4. The applicant shall submit a building permit application for review and approval prior to construction.
5. All signage shall require sign permits.
6. Fire Access in accordance with Fire Code will be maintained.
7. All City Stormwater Management requirements shall be met.
8. A letter of credit or other security as acceptable to the City and shall be deposited with the Zoning Administrator, in an amount equal to 100% of the estimated cost of landscaping and/or screening. The letter of credit or other security as acceptable to the City, or portions thereof, shall be forfeited to maintain and/or replace materials for a period of time to include at least two growing seasons. A portion of the letter of credit or other security as acceptable may be released after one growing season as determined by the Zoning Administrator. The property owner shall be responsible for continued maintenance of landscaping and screening materials to remain in compliance with the requirements of this section. Plant materials that show signs of disease or damage shall be promptly removed and replaced within the next planting season.
9. Vacuum usage shall be limited to business operating hours only (7AM-9PM).
10. The applicant shall utilize single location vacuum suction from within the carwash tunnel, lower operational noise level nozzles, blower units to be placed inside the tunnel and wide roller doors will be closed while blower is in use to mitigate noise in accordance to the recommendations in the Sound Study.

11. Water from the Car Wash shall not drain across any sidewalk or into any public right-of-way.
12. All rooftop or mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner that minimizes the visual impact on adjacent properties and from public streets.
13. The building and site shall be meet all requirements found in the Fire Code and the Building Code.
14. All required state and local codes, permits, licenses, and inspections will be met and in full compliance.
15. The applicant is required to receive final approval by the Fire Department or Authority Having Jurisdiction for the location of the keybox, fire alarm panel, fire annunciator, and FDC connection.
16. All exterior lighting shall be downcast as not to adversely impact neighboring residential properties.
17. All required state and local codes, permits, licenses, and inspections will be met and in full compliance.

RECOMMENDED MOTION(S):

MOTION: Move to close the public hearing and waive the readings of draft Resolution No. 2026-042 and resolution 2026-PZ02, there being ample copies available to the public.

MOTION: Move to recommend to the City Council approval of Resolution No. 2026-042, a Conditional Use Permit allowing a Car Wash at the anticipated address of 4707 Central Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55408, subject to the conditions stated in the draft resolution.

MOTION: Move to approve Resolution No. 2026-PZ02, a final Site Plan for a Car Wash at the anticipated address of 4707 Central Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Narrative
2. Draft Resolution No. 2026-042
3. Resolution 2026-PZ02
4. Civic and Landscape Plans (includes fire access map)
5. Lighting Plan
6. Elevations
7. Sound Study
8. Public Notice with Mailing List
9. Affidavit of Public Notice in the Paper