

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## DESIGN COMMISSION MINUTES

March 19, 2015 meeting

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Moldafsky called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Also present were Commissioners Balcazar, Hoopes, King and Roberts.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** None.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** Minutes - 3/5/2015 Design Commission meeting.  
M/S/C Hoopes/King to adopt the minutes. 5-0
- VI. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None
- VII. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

- A. **Design Review 14-27**  
**550 Foothill Boulevard** (Arco Station)  
FirstElement Fuel

*New hydrogen fueling station*

Consulting architect/planner Cantrell gives an overview of the request to install a new hydrogen fueling station along the east side of the service station at 550 Foothill Blvd. (ARCO). He notes that this is an advisory review since the primary CUP entitlement had not yet been granted by the Planning Commission. Input from this meeting will be forwarded to the Planning Commission when they review the project again on April 28<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Cantrell hands the initial presentation to the applicant for a program overview, noting that design issues will be discussed afterward.

Sean Scully, of Black & Veatch Engineering, introduced the project team and gave a brief overview of the program.

Shane Stevens, cofounder of FirstElement Fuel, outlines the mission of the company and car manufacturers. He gives an overview of fuel cell cars, the State

mandate, and funding. Dr. Stevens shows examples of other stations and options available.

Mr. Cantrell recalls that the Planning Commission dealt with site plan issues and continued the project primarily due to circulation issues. He notes that various constraints have confined the installation to the northeast corner of the site. He states that the Design Commission review will focus on design as distinct from site planning, but that all comments are welcome as informing the next Planning Commission hearing on April 28.

Mr. Cantrell states that normal process involves contextual design, but in this case the context is not worthy of emulation. He sees an opportunity to do something different and unique, possibly futuristic. He notes that the station will have a regional customer base, with most approaching from Gould Avenue via the 210 Freeway, so that the visual approach from the east will be very important.

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell presents photographic images of a City Alternate design contrasted with the submitted design. He notes that the alternate design's purpose is to generate discussion rather than achieve a final result. Its wall surfaces are concave rather than straight, with a matte metallic surface. The submitted canopy was raised and connected to a truss extending back to give more of a sense of structural integrity and visibility from the east. He notes that the applicant has mentioned a garden structure, which he regards as another alternative to investigate.

Commissioner Hoopes states that he liked the City Alternate.

Dr. Stevens states that the standard canopy design will look more structural and robust than submitted, reflecting a wave or water. He states that it is unique, and that he does not want to deviate from it, since it essentially a logo.

Commissioner King asks if the canopy proposed in La Canada Flintridge is different from those at other stations. Dr. Stevens replies that it is not.

Commissioner Hoopes invites a reaction to staff's alternative. Dr. Stevens states that he liked it, but wants to hear from the Commission.

Commissioner Hoopes asks about the wave along the base of the South San Francisco enclosure.

Chair Moldafsky questions whether a futuristic concept would make sense for La Canada Flintridge. He suggests that it should be more integral to the design and

character of the city – quaint and rustic. He comments that he likes the wave as a logo concept.

Mr. Cantrell notes that it would likely be a temporary facility, because if the business survives, it will outgrow the installation, perhaps ultimately within the pump island rather than a stand-alone component. He notes the three basic options for the design – utilitarian, futuristic, or garden structure.

Commissioner Roberts recommends making the canopy stand out and burying the enclosure in landscaping. This would create a spot for the branding and visually diminish the building.

Commissioner Hoopes agrees, to stealth the enclosure as much as possible.

Commissioner King states that it needs to fit more into the community.

Mr. Cantrell states appreciation of the direction, but notes the need for some expression on the east side. Commissioner Roberts states that it should be minimized.

Chair Moldafsky confirms that the applicant is leasing land from Arco.

Mr. Cantrell notes that the State requires clear posting of gasoline prices, but there is currently no such requirement for hydrogen stations.

Chair Moldafsky suggests thinking of materials when developing the trade identity, stressing shape over color.

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell reiterates that formal approval from the Design Commission cannot occur until the Conditional Use Permit entitlement is in place. He states that the Design Commission review serves to inform the upcoming Planning Commission review, and the Design Commission can make a recommendation prior to that review on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Scully seeks clarification on the purview of the Design and Planning Commissions. Mr. Cantrell responds that it is all about the required Conditional Use Permit and Design Review findings, which are different aside from slight overlap with regard to community aesthetics.

Mr. Scully states that there is an issue with a canopy extension over the compound, which is prevented by the fire code. Mr. Cantrell states that the structure shown would be open. Commissioner Roberts comments that he does not think it is necessary. Chair Moldafsky states that the curved wall is not

necessary either, suggesting the straight walls should just be screened with interesting landscaping. Commissioner Roberts endorses “clean and green”, with lattices of varying heights and possibly a river rock base.

Mr. Cantrell states that the Planning Commission had concern with the wall enclosure since it was not as tall as the equipment contained within. The landscaping should match the height of the equipment. A landscape finger along Foothill Boulevard could be added to screen it from street view.

Commissioner Hoopes suggests a background panel for the canopy which would profile it as seen from the west traveling east.

Commissioner Roberts sketches examples of the Commission’s direction.

Mr. Scully comments on the wall height issue, noting that a powder-coated mesh panel could be added atop the wall to match equipment height.

Commissioner Hoopes opposes the idea of a 12-foot wall. It can step, but not too often since this would draw unwanted attention to it.

Mr. Cantrell suggests that a visual hint of equipment within the enclosure is not a bad thing.

Commissioner Hoopes asks about the enclosure’s color.

Mr. Scully responds that darker colors to make the structure ‘recess’ were proposed but not yet specified. This was required as part of the approved project in Santa Barbara.

Commissioner Roberts notes the economics of a garden structure, which would be less than the cost of what is currently proposed.

Mr. Scully states his appreciation of the Commission’s input and notes his desire to see an endorsed design presented to the Planning Commission. He identifies lighting as the last issue to be discussed.

Commissioner Roberts feels that landscape up-lighting and backlighting of the perforated panel would work well.

Mr. Cantrell notes that the item could be put on calendar for final review if everything is resolved at the next meeting, which would occur prior to the Planning Commission’s review on April 28<sup>th</sup>.

M/S/C Hoopes/King to continue project review to the date certain of April 16, 2015. Unanimous 5-0.

## **VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:**

### **A. STUDY SESSION - Streetscape Options Manual & Street Plantings Appendix**

*Discussion and revisions prior to document finalization*

An informal discussion of the documents is held.

Consultant Planner/Architect Cantrell notes that a few minor revisions were needed before the document would be finalized.

Commissioner King comments on her visit to Ojai and observation of trash cans that included metal screens that prevent view of the actual trash can inside, with blue cans for recycling also provided.

Commissioner Roberts notes the need for language “to encourage planters boxes in locations where a street tree is not feasible” and “raised tree canopies can allow for improved sign visibility”.

Chairman Moldafsky states that it might make sense for the City and subs to have trash and recycle bins on the Boulevard.

Jackson Dodd - Public Works Aide - responds to the Chair’s inquiry and stated that commercial waste is already recycled. All collected waste goes to the same place and is filtered accordingly. Two bins would need two different trucks and would cost more money and may not be more efficient.

Commissioner Balcazar thinks that having two bins visible along the Boulevard would send the community a message that the City is being responsive and proactive with regard to waste management and recycling.

Mr. Dodd states that he would review the matter with Director Hitti.

Gonzalo Venegas - Public Works Facilities/Maintenance Coordinator - introduces himself and was available for landscaping/water-related questions.

Commissioner Roberts explains that the Streetscape Options Manual was almost complete and that a comprehensive plant appendix is being developed with the

oversight of Mr. Venegas and the Public Works Dept. He invites Mr. Venegas' input on the document.

Mr. Venegas states that street trees will be the main concern, noting that fruitless evergreen trees with non-invasive root systems would always be preferred. Commissioner Roberts states that street planter boxes were a new component. They can be self-watering and drain to the street for ease of maintenance, etc. Mr. Venegas likes the idea and feels that Director Hitti would be amenable as well.

The Commission reviews conference materials with street planters in order to garner consensus on the design and specifications to be included in the Streetscape Options Manual.

Commissioner Hoopes states that he will look into specifications and colors from manufacturers in order to pin down the final product at the next meeting.

**IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Hoopes reports his attendance at a landscape development seminar that included the benefits of rain-water harvesting, stating that it was a great seminar. Grants can finance most of the required infrastructure, including underground cisterns. He would like to explore the possibility of implementing something similar in LCF.

Commissioner Roberts states that he attending a public hearing for the Link project. The current plan conflicts with the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan and will need to be revised. Achieving the required greenbelt will be difficult since the YMCA doesn't want to lose any parking on either side of street.

**X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:**

Planner Gjolme updates the Commission on issues with landscaping at Ralph's and Unocal 76.

**XI. ADJOURNMENT:**

M/S/C Roberts/Hoopes to adjourn at 10:10 a.m. Unanimous.