

CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

MEETING MINUTES OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE HELD ON APRIL 16, 2015

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Moldafsky called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:**
Also present were Vice-Chair Hoopes and Commissioners Balcazar, King, and Roberts.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** None
- V. **REORDERING OF THE AGENDA:**
Chair Moldafsky recommends reordering the agenda to place Item VIIIB, Oakmont Senior Residences, before Item VIIIA, Preliminary Design of The Link. There are no objections.
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
Minutes of the April 2, 2015 Design Commission meeting.
M/S/C King/Hoopes to approve the minutes: 5-0
- VII. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
 - A. **Design Review 14-27**
550 Foothill Boulevard
FirstElement Fuel

New hydrogen fueling station

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell comments to the audience that the project is undergoing advisory review by the Design Commission as it awaits its April 28 continued Planning Commission hearing for a Conditional Use Permit entitlement. He states the basic location and parameters of the project.

Mr. Cantrell notes the applicant's responses to previous Design Commission direction to treat the building as a garden structure aside from a highlighted canopy and dispenser area. Stepping of the wall height as it approaches the tallest compressor unit to the rear is now provided, to 10 feet from its more forward height of 8'-8". A beam structure is shown atop that low portion of the enclosure, at Foothill Boulevard. In response to the Design Commission recommendation of highlighting the dispenser area, a triptych of layered, etched metallic art is now shown. Mr. Cantrell notes staff's positive view of the artwork, adding that its display should be refined and integrated with the structure

through the use of pilasters adjacent to the artwork and possibly molding atop it. He states that the dispenser continues to be shown as supported by two posts, rather than a more convincing structure as had been expected following the previous meeting.

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell discusses the landscape plan. He notes that the east wall nearest Foothill Boulevard is shown as bare because there is an access path adjacent to it, and recommends moving the path away from the wall in order to allow for more effective landscaping. He notes that the Jacaranda tree proposed behind that area is a good choice. Behind that, he states, is a row of Pittosporum shrubs extending back to the end of the planter. Mr. Cantrell notes that it is fortunate that the shrubs extend back farther than the enclosure rather than in its limited area, but that staff is concerned about the regimented effect of such a straight row. He recommends variety of both species and placement. He reviews planting on each side of the dispenser, noting the need to limit height below the mural. Mr. Cantrell advises against species selection as premature, but notes that additional work will be needed to address grouping according to water and sunlight requirements. He notes that lighting design was also submitted, but that its review would also be premature.

Chair Moldafsky opens the public hearing.

Dr. Shane Stevens, representing FirstElement Fuels, addresses his proposals for the station. He states that the mural could be repeated in other locations as trade dress. He notes that the dispenser canopy is shown out of proportion as well as the tree, which cannot be allowed to have branches overhanging the dispenser. He thanks the Commission for its input.

Commissioner Roberts asks if the walkway to the enclosure is needed. Dr. Stephens states that it is needed for maintenance and safety. Director Stanley asks if it could be located to the rear. Dr. Stephens responds that it cannot, because of fire setbacks and limitations. Commissioner Hoopes confirms that the walkway could jog away from the wall.

Commissioner King asks about the height of the north gates, and whether it would be possible to screen them. Dr. Stephens responds that FirstElement will look into screening, and will provide it to the extent feasible.

Commissioner King asks about the concept of mural Option 1, which Dr. Stephens describes as capturing the flow of water, although other colors can be used.

Chair Moldafsky closes the public hearing.

Commissioner Balcazar states that she thought that the Commission had indicated the desire for more landscaping and highlighting of the dispenser. Commissioner Roberts recalls the Commission wanting the project to disappear through the use of landscape screening.

Commissioner Hoopes comments that he likes the effort so far. He recommends the use of dark colors to make the project recede. He mentions river rock and vines as desirable. He further recommends restricting the wave effect to the protruding areas of the wall. Mr. Hoopes comments that palm trees might not be appropriate in this mountain community. He states that the design is adequate for Planning Commission approval, knowing that later review by the Design Commission will resolve refining issues.

Chair Moldafsky endorses the identification of mountain character as desirable. He notes that the Commission's suggestions are cost neutral.

Mr. Cantrell notes that a draft resolution has been provided, stating that the Design Commission recommends that the Planning Commission make Conditional Use Finding No. 5.

M/S/C Hoopes/Balcazar that the Design Commission adopt the resolution and thus report to the Planning Commission that the fundamental structure of the project can be screened and modified to be acceptable to the community: 5-0

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. (Reordered on agenda to follow Item B)

Preliminary Design The Link Bikeway and Pedestrian Greenbelt Project

Public Works Director Hitti introduces the project, which was presented to the Public Works Commission last month, and introduces City Traffic Engineer Steve Libring and the KOA traffic consultant. Exhibits of the proposed public right of way enhancements are displayed.

Mr. Libring notes that the consultant prepared the design, working with the YMCA to maximize parking. He notes the bulbouts, lack of parking Ts, restriction of handicap parking, closing of one YMCA driveway, and realignment of the YMCA driveway to the signal as optimizing the design. He states that landscape design will follow.

Commissioner Hoopes asks if would benefit traffic calming to introduce undulations. Mr. Libring replies that it might reduce speeds by a few miles per hour, but that the narrowed lanes would accomplish that.

Commissioner King asks about factors to mitigate U-turns at Palm Drive. Director Hitti replies that there will be control with arrow turns.

Chair Moldafsky asks how it was determined to have a bike path, with no bike lane on the street, noting that this is not useful or safe for serious cyclists. Director Hitti replies that the section has been designed to put the bike lane inside the greenbelt. Mr. Moldafsky asks how

the cyclists get into the bike path. Mr. Hitti states that there will be a striping plan that feeds into the new arrangement.

Director Hitti states that as The Link has moved from the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan concept plan to a more developed plan, it is at the stage of NEPA and CEQA design review, the 35% stage.

Commissioner Balcazar asks the purpose of the green areas within the street. Mr. Hitti replies that they are the bulbouts between which there is parking along the street.

Commissioner Roberts leaves the meeting at 10:03 a.m., recusing himself at his own discretion.

Director Stanley inquires about the timeframe. Director Hitti states that it will be coordinated with the YMCA project, and that The Link project has a deadline due to the grant. He notes that a more developed design and landscaping will be forthcoming.

Commissioner Hoopes states that he likes the project for the design and the traffic calming effects, though somewhat limited.

Director Hitti states that it is a linear park that still respects the needs of the YMCA.

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell notes that a long segment from Leata Lane to Littleton Place has no left turn demands. He suggests that the median can be removed or reduced in that segment in order to provide more width to the greenbelt on the south, which would also be useful for screening the retaining wall. Commissioner Hoopes agrees with that idea. Mr. Libring states that it is feasible.

Commissioner King asks about the red pavers at the ends of the median segment. Mr. Hitti replies that they provide a safe zone for movement in either direction.

Commissioner Hoopes asks if there was discussion about addressing the intersection to the east.

Matt McGuinness, Alcorn Drive, Board Member of the YMCA, wonders why the beautification has not yet been implemented. He states that the bike path is eligible for funding that a bike lane would not be, and that the Boulevard is not used much by serious bicyclists. He states that the 2-story parking structure planned for the YMCA would cost 7 to 9 million dollars, which probably cannot be funded. He stated the YMCA does not want to encroach on residents with parking, and that the City should look at what is being given up with median.

Pat Lidell, 1061 Valley Sun Lane, representing the Chamber of Commerce, states that serious bicyclists will not use the bike path, and he doubts its success. Commissioner

Hoopes recommends that a bike path be curvilinear and designed for children as in Thousand Oaks.

John Roberts, Alcorn Drive, recused Design Commissioner, speaks as a member of the public. He states that his biggest direction on this Commission was street trees, and it took ten years to get the median strips to go in the Old Town District. He comments that the proposed plan is too far off from the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan, which had no street parking. He states that the only people parking on Foothill are using the YMCA, and that the YMCA should park within its means. He describes the City provision of parking in The Link as too many eggs in one basket, since the YMCA could decide to close this facility in 5 years and go elsewhere, with the unused parking pavement left. Mr. Roberts states that there should be some compromise, and that the plan as presented has only small segments of 25-foot-wide greenbelt. He recommends the creation of a greenbelt that has workout stations, which would enhance the use of the YMCA as well. He concludes by stating that the YMCA needs to mitigate some of their parking.

Commissioner Hoopes recalls that the Commission had a workshop to lay out the median design, and recommends that the same should be done for The Link project.

Director Hitti suggests moving the greenbelt away from the retaining wall and separating each mode with green strip in the interest of a linear park feeling.

Chair Moldafsky closes the public hearing.

Mr. Moldafsky states that a bike lane in the street is the most efficient and comfortable for serious bicyclists, but that funding is dependent on the bike path. Commissioner Hoopes states that this is not just about spending money, but rather about creating something that serves the community. He questions how much the bike path would be used.

Director Stanley recommends going back to the intent of the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan, and reads the statement from Plan about screening the retaining wall and maximizing green spaces. He suggests not worrying about traffic and focusing on landscaping and how the plan relates to the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan.

Mr. Stanley also explains that Commissioner Roberts recused himself despite the City Attorney's determination that it was not required. Mr. Roberts did not want any chance of an appearance of self-interest tainting perception of the Commission action.

Commissioner Hoopes states that he likes what was done and more landscaping can improve it. He notes the need to resolve the bike lane issue. He states that the Design Commission should work with the Public Works Department on a workshop – a “big table exercise” – the end result of which should please everyone and maximize community benefit.

Commissioner Balcazar states that the Master Plan was considered, and asks about the objectives of a workshop.

Director Stanley states that eventually the landscaping will be brought to the Design Commission for review after further development, and that at this point the question is whether there is more right-of-way design needed.

Chair Moldafsky agrees with Commissioner Hoopes, noting that the plan achieves what the Foothill Boulevard Master Plan desired, but the project would benefit from a workshop and provide support and direction to consultant.

Director Hitti states the need to have a complete document by June. Director Stanley concludes that there is time for a workshop, to be scheduled.

B. (Reordered on agenda to precede Item A)

**Design Review 15-01
Preliminary Advisory Review
600 Foothill Boulevard
Oakmont Senior Living**

Three-story senior residential building atop a subterranean parking basement. Additionally, a Christian Science Church building is proposed between the Foothill Boulevard frontage and the residential building.

Consulting Architect/Planner Cantrell notes that the project is at its very first stage of review. It is a preliminary review for design, an opportunity for early comments to be made before it is taken to formal review. The first hearing will be at the Planning Commission for a Conditional Use Permit, which considers a broader range of issues than design. Design Commission approval will be required after the Conditional Use Permit is granted. Until then, Design Commission comments are only advisory to the Planning Commission.

Mr. Cantrell displays the renderings, site plan, and elevations provided by the applicant. He then outlines staff's concerns at this early point:

1. The character of the project is institutional rather than residential, because of its large scale, unrelieved massing, lack of residential elements, and symmetry.
2. The church is inviting, but the dominant motor court is contrary to the Downtown Village Specific Plan's objectives for the Boulevard. Mr. Cantrell points out the path from the west, behind the parking lot, but notes that entry from the east is limited to a path the cuts through the motor court. He emphasizes that the residents are distant and closed off from the outside world, with the leisure area only at the rear.

3. Rooftop use is not indicated, but could be considered for the residents to enjoy expansive views and fresh air.
4. A taller first floor is needed for proper proportions, giving the building a base. He notes that the roofs are too high and shallow to be seen from anywhere nearby; only the eave line would be viewed. He recommends the use of stepped massing rather than the straight 3-story walls, which could introduce balconies.
5. The church is charming and interesting, with residential qualities lacking in the residential structure. He recommends that it be better integrated with the residence through shared spaces.

Mr. Cantrell then displays a slide listing the classic design principles that will be used to evaluate the project in the future, and the findings that will be required for project approval following its formal review.

Commissioner Hoopes confirms that the Commission's responsibility is to give feedback to the applicant regarding the architecture, focusing on the issues in the staff report. He notes that other tall buildings are nearby, namely Caltech Credit Union and the Presbyterian Church.

Chair Moldafsky opens the public comments.

Bill Gallaher, Oakmont Senior Living founder and managing member, introduced himself and states the company's scope and decades in service. He introduces Chris Kasulka, President and Managing Partner.

Ms. Kasulka notes that the typical Oakmont resident is an 88-year-old woman, taking 10 medications per day, and the one-third of the residents have memory impairment. Since it is not an independent living facility, security is paramount. She states that their facilities are licensed through the State. Ms. Kasulka states that they provide dining and transport too many activities. She notes that there are only 24 licensed beds in La Canada Flintridge.

Commissioner Hoopes asks about the feasibility of rooftop use. Ms. Kasulka states that they don't have any rooftop facilities at their locations, and that licensing would raise concerns, along with safety and security.

Commissioner Roberts asks about separating the massing into discreet interconnected buildings, perhaps correlating to different levels of care. Ms. Kasulka replies that their facilities need to be under one roof because of staffing and operation needs. She emphasizes the high quality of their projects. She expressed hope of meeting the operational needs and what would be acceptable to the City.

Mark Yurada, 4411 Woodleigh Lane, praises the introduction of senior care, but comments that the current design is not fitting. He states that its appearance from the residential neighborhood is important. He questions the location due to the intersection, the low lighting, and the dangerous sidewalks.

Michel Gross, 4431 Woodleigh Lane, states no problem with senior housing, but comments the project's scale and character are problematic. He cites as well the square shape as not fitting in, and encourages the use of true peaked roofs.

Patty Smith, 4427 Woodleigh Lane, notes her disappointment in the developer because no changes have been made since earlier presentation of the project to the neighbors. She states that the community should have senior housing, but that three story buildings are not found elsewhere in the city. She describes the project as very boxy. - early presented the same and no changes have happened - should have senior living but no other three story buildings - very boxy - senior living will be the greatest new project in future but the bulk is problem - the security of the facility is a concern and sirens from Fire Department is a concern

Elsa Gross, 4431 Woodleigh Lane, states that her house is closest to the facility. She notes that the residential neighborhood is downslope from Foothill, so that from her house the three-story building would look like 4 stories. She states that the corner of Foothill and Woodleigh is dangerous for pedestrians and motorists trying to turn. She mentions the drought as affecting development, and suggests that the location is wrong for this type of housing. She concludes by suggesting that some adjustments are needed.

Kevin Earhart, 4277 Woodleigh Lane, states that the project is not residential in character, and that nothing that can be done reasonably and still make it consistent with the community. He comments that there is nothing on Foothill remotely like this project. Mr. Earhart states that is one of the most dangerous corners on Foothill, and a disaster waiting to happen.

Paris Cohen, City resident and business owner with an office at 650 Foothill Boulevard, questions the height and bulk of the building. She encourages this use, but reduced to 2 stories. She suggests that other styles of architecture could be appropriate.

Manny Mashood questions views of the building, suggesting that its massing be made consistent with the area.

Sharon Rising, Georgian Road, states that this is a mountain community and the project design does not represent the city. She mentions that there is a 6-resident senior facility across the street from her, and that they did not receive a notice because of its small size. She reports concern about traffic.

Jim Scholer, Georgian Road, thanks Mr. Cantrell for the report. He describes the project as large and institutional, noting that the entrance on Foothill is not designed well. He asks where visitors would park.

Mike Wright, Woodleigh Lane, states that all understand the need for the facility. He comments that the corner is the worst location, and that the appearance of the facility is inappropriate for this city.

Pat Lidell, business owner with a partner who lives on Woodleigh, is representing the Chamber of Commerce. He notes that many issues have been identified already. He states that rooftop facilities as suggested by staff are not for this type of structure. He concludes by stating that this is a development that is needed and the question is where.

Michael Gross, 4431 Woodleigh, states that as long as it is consistent with his back yard it will be supported. He doesn't want a business park design. Mr. Gross reiterates that it is needed in this community, addressing a need that should have been met long ago.

Rahla Hall, 1044 Fairview, reports having moved to the city in 1959 and being active in the community for long time. She is a member for First Church of Christ Scientist. She notes that the purpose of the meeting is limited to design, and that she is in favor of the Oakmont project as a way for seniors to stay in town, since the city is losing such residents to other communities. She comments that the facility will be seen no matter how tall, and will eventually be revised.

Don Vandervor, Palm Drive, comments that he loves the idea of being able to stay in the city but not in an institution. He states that he would want something more in line with the village concept.

Chair Moldafsky close public comments.

Commissioner Hoopes states that one can't just put shingles on a box and make it look good. He questions relying too heavily on landscaping. He recommends vertical articulation, noting that it is complicated with third level circulation. He comments favorably on the facility location because of surrounding benefits along Foothill, questioning how much Woodleigh would be used for walking. He states support for the colors, suggesting the addition of stone. He recommends reducing project height, and the need to study the massing more. He endorses more visible roofs.

Commissioner Roberts comments that it is basically a big box, and questions the use of landscaping on the renderings to soften the views. Mr. Roberts states that the project needs to look like several buildings, acknowledging that it is difficult for the architect to think outside the box. He believes that three stories could be too much, and that the project needs to live within its means, including parking and deliveries. He adds that the Craftsman style is not suited to a big box, which is better paired with other styles. He recommends bringing

down the project to residential scale, using a model to show the relationship to the surrounding buildings.

Commissioner Balcazar welcomes the use, but concurs with questions about project massing and scale.

Commissioner King states that three stories as shown is too tall, and recommends a village concept. She notes the existence of trees that should be taken into consideration. She notes that traffic on Foothill, including the Arco station, will have to be addressed. She endorses the colors, and recommends the addition of balconies and higher pitched roofs as on the church buildings.

Chair Moldafsky states that the Design Commission cannot speak to traffic and planning issues. He notes that it is very early, and the scope of facility will be determined. Mr. Moldafsky comments that the proportion of development is important. He endorses the idea of a massing model, noting that the colors and façade details can then be worked out.

Director Stanley states that the applicant may want to come back to Design Commission with design revisions, at their option.

IX. OTHER BUSINESS: None

X. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS: None

XI. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Director Stanley suggests that the meeting to deal with The Link should be on a Thursday, perhaps in two weeks (April 30).

XII. ADJOURNMENT: M/S/C King/Balcazar to adjourn meeting at 10:50 a.m.: 5-0