

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON JUNE 3, 2010**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Commissioner Tobias called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.
- II. **SWEARING IN OF JON MOLDAFSKY AS NEW DESIGN COMMISSIONER.** Staff explained that this had been done the prior day.
- III. **ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Moldafsky and Roberts, Planners Gjolme and Clarke, Director of Community Development Stanley and consulting architect Cantrell. Chairman Vavoulis and Commissioner Hoopes were absent.
- IV. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- V. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were no comments offered.
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
 - A. **Minutes** - May 20, 2010 DC Meeting. Lacking a quorum, the minutes were continued to the next meeting.
 - B. **Design Review 10-07 & 10-08;** 845 & 849 Foothill Blvd.; Thomas Sawyer; exterior façade changes and new signage to existing building. Final review and approval of new landscaping.

Planner Clarke gave a brief project update and explained that a landscape plan had been provided per the conditions of approval. Approval of the plan as submitted was recommended by staff.

Brian Sullivan - Atlas Design - landscaper for the project - noted that a variety of drought tolerant plants were used in the planters. Many were free-formed plants suited for the LCF climate.

Commissioner Roberts explained that the City was in the process of trying to rework the Street Tree program to include private property, but that this would not occur in front of this particular business. He inquired about the use of trees other than strawberry trees as indicated and preferred planting size to be increased to 24-inch box.

Mr. Sullivan confirmed that alternate species were possible, and referenced Chilopsis as a possible selection.

Commissioner Roberts noted that the City Arborist has selected tabebuias for properties north of the site.

Commissioner Tobias inquired above the location of the proposed olive trees.

Mr. Sullivan explained they would be installed behind the building as parking lot trees.

M/S/C Roberts/Tobias to approve the landscape plan with use of an alternative 'street tree' species to be installed in a 24-inch box. 3-0.

VII. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

A. Design Review 08-12; 1975 Verdugo Blvd.; Howard. Final review and approval of landscaping, lighting and signage per original conditions of approval.

Consultant Cantrell gave an overview of the project's history and explained that signage, landscaping and lighting were returned for final review and approval in conjunction with conditions of the original approval.

Commissioner Roberts confirmed that copy height and sign height flexibility (to a maximum of 2'-6") was warranted and agreed with staff's assessment.

Commissioner Tobias felt the signs lacked a natural look given the use of acrylic lettering. He recalled that natural-looking signs were desired by the Commission given the style and design of the building.

Planner Gjolme noted that the original approval required the signs to be located under the overhang and external illumination only.

Consultant Cantrell inquired about lighting fixtures along the west elevation below the balcony. He questioned the purpose of the lights.

Applicant Bob Taylor explained that the plaque signs would be high density foam with simulated wood grain.

Commissioner Tobias expressed concern with letters that appear to be slapped on the signs.

My. Taylor explained that the tenant monument sign is over size to accommodate architectural features along its outer perimeter.

Lee Duchart - sign consultant - explained the difference between the overall sign area and sign copy area. The excess plaque size was acceptable to staff; he was hoping for the same consideration with the monument signs.

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Consultant Cantrell clarified that the Design Commission cannot approve size above and beyond what code stipulates. The signs would require a Variance as submitted.

Commissioner Moldafsky questioned what size lettering would be necessary to accomplish project goals.

Mr. Duchart stated that the proposal as submitted would be acceptable and 10-inch letters were desired.

Commissioner Tobias noted that the sign's overall size as proposed is approximately 10'x12', which is basically twice the code limit and not appropriate. The Commission can't approve any sign larger than 6'x8' with 30 sq. ft. of copy. There are ways to reduce overall sign area to comply with code. The restaurant is the main tenant and has considerable visibility.

Mr. Duchart noted that sign visibility seems limited by requiring the plaques to be located under the overhang. He felt extra monument sign area would compensate.

Brad Howard - property owner and co-applicant - noted the problem is that the tenant units don't face Verdugo Blvd. given the design and orientation of the building. This combined with a lack of allowable wall signage hurts business exposure. The project record shows some consideration could be granted in conjunction with pole sign removal.

Commissioner Roberts noted the lights along the west elevation and thought the logical thing to do would be to lower the lights to limit exposure along the street, which rises to the east and precludes views of the building's 1st story.

Consultant Cantrell inquired about the use of ground mounted lights that face the building.

Commissioner Roberts noted the lights proposed have top shields and lowering them would solve the issue.

Commissioner Roberts preferred star jasmine in the areas red apple is used. He also desired the planting size of the trumpet vines to be increased to 15 gallon and the Boston ivy to be increased to 5 gallon. The site is on the edge of the City and he felt that the plan worked well as proposed.

M/S/C Roberts/Moldafsky to approve the landscape plan with the above changes. Approved 3-0.

Commissioner Tobias confirmed that three plaque signs are on the south elevation and would be externally illuminated by recessed soffit lighting.

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Commissioner Roberts stated that he wanted successful tenants for the new building but was concerned that the signage may not be effective as currently proposed. He agreed that flexibility for the plaques was absolutely needed given the difficulty in configuring various logos within elongated rectangular space. The upper monument sign copy (La Vista and Indian springs) does not need to be lit and could be removed to allow for more sign area if needed. He believed a stand-alone monument sign for the restaurant was needed, since it would be the key tenant, and thought compensatory removal of the south plaques, which would no longer be necessary, was appropriate.

Commissioner Tobias noted the concern and code issue with the existing pole sign but also explained that the pole sign would effectively disappear when the building is built. He agreed that a monument sign for the restaurant was needed.

Mr. Duchart confirmed that 50 feet of separation is required between monument signs.

Commissioner Roberts felt an opportunity had presented itself in that an attractive restaurant sign could be built into the low retaining wall along the front of building.

Commissioner Moldafsky noted that the retaining wall sign would be a ground sign and would still need a Variance, unless the pole signs were removed.

Commissioner Tobias would support a third ground sign in conjunction with a variance submittal.

Commissioner Roberts believed the Radio Shack ground sign should be composed differently since it relates to a different commercial center.

Director Stanley explained that staff would not support a Variance if it included retention of the pole signs since this would be in direct conflict with the City's General Plan.

Commission discussion ensued about the parameters of a possible motion to allow generic approval of two new monument signs that would return to the Commission for final review at a later date as well as other items are previously discussed.

M/S/C Tobias/Roberts to approve 2 new monument signs - a sign at the southeast corner for a maximum of three tenants that utilizes a stone base with a recommendation for routed letters and a sign along front of the restaurant or incorporated into the low retaining wall, with both signs conforming to code for height, size, etc. Said approval inherently includes either removal of the pole sign

or approval of it through the Variance process. Retention of one plaque sign on the south elevation would be possible in conjunction with final DC approval of the monument signs. Light fixtures along west elevation would be lowered approx. 10 feet subject to confirmation by staff. Approved 3-0.

VIII. OTHER BUSINESS:

A. Discussion of Annual Design Excellence Award program.

Commissioner Tobias briefly commented that the Mayor wants it to be a City award, not a Chamber award, and that it could possibly include a "green" and water component. The item would be discussed further at the Council retreat.

IX. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioners Tobias and Roberts welcomed Mr. Moldafsky to the Design Commission.

Commissioner Tobias thought a photo inventory of past projects would be helpful to have on hand at future meetings.

X. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Director Stanley commented that he attended a water / drought tolerant landscaping conference.

Planner Clarke explained AB 1881 and how the City has to default to the State's Ordinance in lieu of preparing its own Ordinance.

Planner Gjolme reminded the Commission that the next meeting would be at 4:30 pm and held in Memorial Park.

XI. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 a.m.