

**CITY OF CALISTOGA  
STAFF REPORT**

**TO: CHAIRMAN MANFREDI AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

**FROM: KEN MACNAB, PLANNING AND BUILDING MANAGER**

**MEETING DATE: JUNE 22, 2011**

**SUBJECT: DESIGN REVIEW (DR 2009-03) OF GAS PRICING SIGN AT  
FAST AND EASY GAS STATION**

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3 **REQUEST**  
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5 **DR 2009-03.** Consideration of a request for Design Review approval to install a 31.5 square foot  
6 gas price sign. The proposed sign is 5.5 feet in height and 7 feet in width and will replace the  
7 existing monument sign located at the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Foothill Boulevard. The  
8 subject gas station is located at 1108 Lincoln Avenue (APN 011-254-003) within the “DC-DD”,  
9 Downtown Commercial-Design District Overlay Zoning District. No changes to use or  
10 operations are being proposed as part of this application. This proposed action is exempt from  
11 the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under Section 15303 of the CEQA Guidelines.  
12

13 **BACKGROUND**  
14

15 The subject gas station has been in operation for more than 40 years. Since its establishment a  
16 number of modifications have been made to the use and the site. In 1984, Use Permit U 84-10  
17 was granted to convert the original automobile service bays to a convenience food and  
18 beverage market. In 1990, the Planning Commission approved Use Permit U 89-11 to construct  
19 a cold storage addition to the convenience market. Use Permit U 93-10 allowing modification of  
20 the gasoline pump islands, the building exterior and the addition of landscape and parking areas  
21 was approved by the Planning Commission in 1994. Current signage and colors were approved  
22 by the Planning Commission in 2003 (DR 2003-10), and the existing yellow and red awning on  
23 the convenience market was approved administratively in 2006 (DR 2006-13).  
24

25 On July 9, 2009, the Planning and Building Department received an application from Technical  
26 Studies, Inc., to install fueling canopies and change the corporate identity / color scheme at the  
27 subject station. The application was considered at a public hearing before the Planning  
28 Commission on August 12, 2009. After receiving a report and presentation from staff and in  
29 consideration of oral and written testimony from members of the public, the Planning  
30 Commission continued the item and appointed a sub-committee to work with the applicant in  
31 addressing concerns about the project’s consistency with General Plan design objectives for the  
32 “Lincoln Avenue at Foothill Boulevard Entry Corridor area.” The proposed changes to the  
33 station’s corporate identity and color scheme were ultimately approved by the Planning  
34 Commission on December 9, 2009, but subsequently denied by the City Council as part of an

35 appeal filed by the applicant on a separate matter. In its action, the City Council referred all  
36 design issues back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration.  
37

38 Following the appeal hearing on April 20, 2010, the applicant came under investigation by the  
39 Weights and Measures division of the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner's office for  
40 operating without properly identifying the brand of petroleum products being sold. A settlement  
41 was reached with the Consumer Affairs division of the Napa County District Attorney's office on  
42 May 19, 2011. The applicant is now under order to install appropriate signage identifying the  
43 petroleum products being sold on the site.  
44

45 On June 6, 2011, the Planning and Building Department received a sign proposal for replacing  
46 the existing "monument" sign located near the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Foothill Boulevard  
47 (Attachment 4).  
48

49

50 **PROJECT SITE**

51  
52 The subject site is approximately 0.30 acres in size and is located at the corner of Foothill  
53 Boulevard and Lincoln Avenue. Land uses in the vicinity consist mainly of highway-oriented  
54 service and commercial uses. The site is located within an Entry Corridor (EC-3) as identified  
55 on Figure LU-6 in the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan (Attachment 3) and is  
56 currently zoned "DC-DD", Downtown Commercial-Design District Overlay. Existing site  
57 improvements include a convenience market, two fuel dispensing islands, a parking area, and  
58 several small landscaped areas.  
59

60 **FIGURE 1 – PROJECT SITE**



80 **ANALYSIS**

81  
82 Review of this application is subject to the development standards and findings of Sections  
83 17.06 (Design Guidelines), 17.22 (Commercial Land Use Districts), 17.56 (Highway and Street  
84 Setback Requirements) and 17.58 (Signs) of the Calistoga Municipal Code. The project is also  
85 subject to goals, policies and narrative in the Land Use and Community Identity Elements of the  
86 General Plan that address Entry Corridors. The following analysis considers the project's  
87 consistency with these regulations and policies.  
88

89 *Pricing Sign*

90  
91 The applicant is proposing to replace an existing 11.5 foot tall, 40 square foot internally  
92 illuminated “monument sign” with a 31.5 square foot gas price sign that is 5.5 feet in height and  
93 7 feet in width. Although the new sign has a total size of 31.5 square feet, only the upper  
94 portion of the sign (7 square feet) is counted toward the sign allowance because the State  
95 mandated gasoline pricing portion of the sign has traditionally not been included in the signage  
96 calculation. Attachment 4 provides detailed sign dimensions and a site plan showing its  
97 proposed placement on the subject site.  
98

99 **FIGURE 2 – CONCEPTUAL RENDERING OF PROPOSED SIGN**



125 The proposed sign will be “double-faced”, internally illuminated and cased in a painted black  
126 aluminum cabinet. A one-foot high sign pedestal is being proposed to raise the sign above the  
127 planter bed. Including the pedestal, the sign will have a total height of 5.5 feet. Landscaping is

128 proposed to be retained around the base of the sign pedestal. Sign colors are primarily red and  
129 white (the brand color of Fast and Easy). In accordance with legal requirements, the pricing for  
130 diesel fuel is indicated in green. A condition of approval (Condition No. 2) has been added  
131 requiring that the red colored portions of the proposed sign match the red trim on the awning,  
132 “Food Mart” sign and protective bollards.

133  
134 Section 17.58.06(A)(1)(b) of the City’s sign regulations allows up to 50 square feet of sign area  
135 for business identification signage. The square footage (s.f.) of all signage on the property is  
136 summarized below.

137

138	Proposed Pricing Sign	:	7 s.f.
139	“Food Mart” Sign	:	<u>5 s.f.</u>
140			
141	TOTAL SQUARE FEET	:	12 s.f.
142			
143	MAX. PERMITTED	:	50 s.f.
144			

145

146 As submitted, the square footage of all existing and proposed signage is within the 50 square  
147 foot maximum.

148  
149 Interior Illumination

150  
151 Section 17.58.070(B) of the City’s sign regulations requires Design Review approval by the  
152 Planning Commission for interior illuminated signs. In approving interior illuminated signs, the  
153 Planning Commission must determine that the signs are consistent with the architectural  
154 character of the building and adjoining structures with respect to design, light intensity, color and  
155 other similar design characteristics. The purpose of this requirement is to minimize the  
156 perpetuation of “boxed” cabinet signs which are generally old-fashioned and aesthetically  
157 clumsy in relation to building architecture and detailing. Because the sign is replacing an  
158 existing internally illuminated sign and is similar to an existing internally illuminated sign located  
159 directly across the street, staff is recommending that the Planning Commission approve the  
160 internally illuminated sign.

161  
162 Setback Requirements

163  
164 Section 17.22.050(A) of the Zoning Ordinance (Setbacks for the DC Zoning District) establishes  
165 a 0 foot minimum setback distance from the front property lines on Foothill Boulevard and  
166 Lincoln Avenue. Section 17.56.030(D) of the Zoning Ordinance (Street and Highway Setbacks)  
167 establishes a minimum setback of 5 feet from the property line along State Route 29/State  
168 Highway 128 and a minimum setback of 30 feet from the centerline of Lincoln Avenue.

169  
170 The proposed sign replaces an existing sign that is located within the required setback area  
171 along State Route 29/State Highway 128. The new sign installation would continue this existing  
172 non-conforming condition (but not intensify it) and therefore is not in conflict with the State  
173 Highway setback requirement for State Route 29/State Highway 128.

174

175 Both the existing monument sign and the proposed replacement sign are located outside of the  
176 required 30 foot setback from the centerline of Lincoln Avenue.

177  
178 Lincoln Avenue – Foothill Boulevard Entry Corridor

179  
180 The Land Use Element of the City's General Plan establishes Entry Corridor Overlays at major  
181 entry points into Calistoga. These areas present a unique opportunity to preserve and protect the  
182 "country town" appearance of Calistoga. Development in these areas should maintain existing  
183 rural and open space qualities. Appropriate site layout, architecture, and setbacks are to be  
184 employed to create an understated visual appearance for development that is visible from the  
185 roadway.

186  
187 The subject property is located within the "Lincoln Avenue at Foothill Boulevard" Entry Corridor  
188 (Entry Corridor 3). Many of the properties in this area are highway-oriented with limited  
189 landscaping and substantial amounts of land on each parcel set aside for automobile access and  
190 parking. General Plan narrative states a desire for new development in the Lincoln Avenue-  
191 Foothill Boulevard Entry Corridor Area to include minor landmark features such as small signs or  
192 gateway landscaping to mark the entrance to the Downtown area on Lincoln Avenue. Objective  
193 CI-2.1 under Goal CI-2 of the Community Identity Element of the General Plan calls for the  
194 protection of Calistoga's entrance points. Implementing policy P2 states that the Design Review  
195 process shall be used to require new development at the major entrances to the city to be  
196 aesthetically pleasing, provide buffering between land uses, and retain open space, unique land  
197 features and small-town rural character.

198  
199 Staff believes that the proposed sign will result in a minor improvement of aesthetic conditions at  
200 the intersection by replacing an existing 11.5 foot, 40 square foot monument sign with a smaller,  
201 more appropriately scaled sign.

202  
203 **CORRESPONDENCE**

204  
205 As of the writing of this report no correspondence has been received regarding the proposed  
206 sign.

207  
208 **FINDINGS:**

209  
210 In addition to the above discussion, the analysis of this project includes reference to the  
211 Findings for Design Review Approval (CMC 17.06.040). These are discussed generally as  
212 follows:

- 213  
214 A. *The extent to which the proposal is compatible with the existing development pattern*  
215 *with regard to massing, scale, setbacks, color, textures, materials, etc.;*

216  
217 Response: The proposed replacement sign is more compatible with the scale of the  
218 Lincoln Avenue/Foothill Boulevard intersection than the current monument sign. Sign  
219 materials are typical for a gasoline pricing sign and are similar to the materials used on a  
220 gasoline pricing sign located directly across the street from the subject site.

221

222 B. *Site layout, orientation, location of structures, relationship to one another, open spaces*  
223 *and topography;*

224  
225 Response: The placement and orientation of the proposed sign is appropriate given its  
226 function.

227  
228 C. *Harmonious relationship of character and scale with existing and proposed adjoining*  
229 *development, achieving complementary style while avoiding both excessive variety and*  
230 *monotonous repetition;*

231  
232 Response: The proposed size of the sign is harmonious with the scale of the  
233 intersection and with existing structures on the site. The proposed sign will add design  
234 variety by replacing an existing sign that is identical to a sign located directly across the  
235 street from the subject site.

236  
237 D. *Building design, materials, colors and textures that are compatible and appropriate to*  
238 *Calistoga. Whether the architectural design of structures and their materials and colors*  
239 *are appropriate to the function of the project;*

240  
241 Response: The design, materials, colors and textures are appropriate to the sign's  
242 function – as both a pricing sign and a sign identifying the Fast and Easy gasoline brand.  
243 Condition No. 2 requires that the red colored portions of the proposed sign match the red  
244 trim on the awning, "Food Mart" sign and protective bollards.

245  
246 E. *Harmony of materials, colors, and composition of those sides of a structure, which are*  
247 *visible simultaneously;*

248  
249 Response: See previous response D.

250  
251 F. *Consistency of composition and treatment;*

252  
253 Response: The proposed sign reflects a consistent application of colors and/or materials  
254 on both of its sides.

255  
256 G. *Location and type of planting with regard to valley conditions. Preservation of specimen*  
257 *and landmark trees upon a site, with proper irrigation to insure water conservation and*  
258 *maintenance of all plant materials;*

259  
260 Response: Existing landscaped areas will be retained and planted with appropriate  
261 plantings. No trees will be removed as part of the project.

262  
263 H. *Whether exterior lighting, design signs and graphics are compatible with the overall*  
264 *design approach and appropriate for the setting;*

265  
266 Response: The proposed sign design and graphics are compatible with the overall  
267 design approach and appropriate for the existing gas station use. The method of  
268 illumination (internal) is the same as the existing sign.

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I. *The need for improvement of existing site conditions including but not limited to signage, landscaping, lighting, etc., to achieve closer compliance with current standards;*

Response: No additional improvements are required to bring the site into conformance with current development standards.

J. *Whether the design promotes a high design standard and utilizes quality materials compatible with the surrounding development consistent with and appropriate for the nature of the proposed use;*

Response: As described in the above findings, the proposed sign design, color and materials are compatible with development in the surrounding area and will improve aesthetic conditions at the subject intersection.

K. *Responsible use of natural and reclaimed resources.*

Response: This proposed project does not involve or propose use of natural or reclaimed resources.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303 (Construction of Small Structures) of the CEQA Guidelines.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Design Review (DR 2009-03) to allow installation of a 31.5 square foot gasoline pricing sign at the gas station located at 1108 Lincoln Avenue (APN 011-254-003) within the “DC-DD”, Downtown Commercial-Design District Overlay Zoning District, subject to conditions of approval.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Resolution PC 2011-13
3. Figure LU-6 and Corresponding Narrative: Entry Corridors
4. Proposed Sign and Site Plan

**NOTE:** The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Calistoga Municipal Code provides for a ten (10) calendar day appeal period. If there is a disagreement with the Planning Commission, an appeal to the City Council may be filed. The appropriate forms and applicable fee must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the tenth calendar day following the Commission's final determination.