

**CITY OF CALISTOGA**  
**STAFF REPORT**

**TO: CHAIRMAN MANFREDI AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS**

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

**MEETING DATE: AUGUST 10, 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 *This item was continued from the July 13, 2011 regular meeting of the Planning Commission.*  
13

14 **BACKGROUND**  
15

16 The subject gas station has been in operation for more than 40 years. Since its establishment a  
17 number of modifications have been made to the use and the site. In 1984, Use Permit U 84-10  
18 was granted to convert the original automobile service bays to a convenience food and  
19 beverage market. In 1990, the Planning Commission approved Use Permit U 89-11 to construct  
20 a cold storage addition to the convenience market. Use Permit U 93-10 allowing modification of  
21 the gasoline pump islands, the building exterior and the addition of landscape and parking areas  
22 was approved by the Planning Commission in 1994. Current signage and colors were approved  
23 by the Planning Commission in 2003 (DR 2003-10), and the existing yellow and red awning on  
24 the convenience market was approved administratively in 2006 (DR 2006-13).  
25

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

36 appeal filed by the applicant on a separate matter. In its action, the City Council referred all  
37 design issues back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration.  
38

39 Following the appeal hearing on April 20, 2010, the applicant came under investigation by the  
40 Weights and Measures division of the Napa County Agricultural Commissioner's office for  
41 operating without properly identifying the brand of petroleum products being sold. A settlement  
42 was reached with the Consumer Affairs division of the Napa County District Attorney's office on  
43 May 19, 2011. The applicant is now under order to install appropriate signage identifying the  
44 petroleum products being sold on the site.  
45

46 On June 6, 2011, the Planning and Building Department received a sign proposal for replacing  
47 the existing "monument" sign located near the corner of Lincoln Avenue and Foothill Boulevard.  
48 A slightly modified sign design was received by staff on July 21, 2011 (Attachment 4).  
49

50  
51 **PROJECT SITE**  
52

53 The subject site is approximately 0.30 acres in size and is located at the corner of Foothill  
54 Boulevard and Lincoln Avenue. Land uses in the vicinity consist mainly of highway-oriented  
55 service and commercial uses. The site is located within an Entry Corridor (EC-3) as identified  
56 on Figure LU-6 in the Land Use Element of the City's General Plan (Attachment 3) and is  
57 currently zoned "DC-DD", Downtown Commercial-Design District Overlay. Existing site  
58 improvements include a convenience market, two fuel dispensing islands, a parking area, and  
59 several small landscaped areas.  
60

61 **FIGURE 1 – PROJECT SITE**  
62



81 **ANALYSIS**

82  
83 Review of this application is subject to the development standards and findings of Sections  
84 17.06 (Design Guidelines), 17.22 (Commercial Land Use Districts), 17.56 (Highway and Street  
85 Setback Requirements) and 17.58 (Signs) of the Calistoga Municipal Code. The project is also  
86 subject to goals, policies and narrative in the Land Use and Community Identity Elements of the  
87 General Plan that address Entry Corridors. The following analysis considers the project's  
88 consistency with these regulations and policies.  
89

90 *Pricing Sign*

91  
92 The applicant is proposing to replace an existing 11.5 foot tall, 40 square foot internally  
93 illuminated “monument sign” with a 31.5 square foot gas price sign that is 5.5 feet in height and  
94 7 feet in width. Although the new sign has a total size of 31.5 square feet, only the upper  
95 portion of the sign (7 square feet) is counted toward the sign allowance because the State  
96 mandated gasoline pricing portion of the sign has traditionally not been included in the signage  
97 calculation. Attachment 4 provides detailed sign dimensions and a site plan showing its  
98 proposed placement on the subject site.  
99

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



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

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

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

139

140	Proposed Pricing Sign	:	7 s.f.
141			
142	“Food Mart” Sign	:	<u>5 s.f.</u>
143			
144	TOTAL SQUARE FEET	:	12 s.f.
145			
146	MAX. PERMITTED	:	50 s.f.
147			

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

150  
151 Interior Illumination

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

163  
164 Setback Requirements

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

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

176

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

179  
180 Lincoln Avenue – Foothill Boulevard Entry Corridor

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

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

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

204  
205 **CORRESPONDENCE**

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

209  
210 **FINDINGS:**

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

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

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

223

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

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

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

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

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

242  
243 Response: The design, materials, colors and textures are appropriate to the sign's  
244 function – as both a pricing sign and a sign identifying the Fast and Easy gasoline brand.  
245 Condition No. 2 requires that the red colored portions of the proposed sign match the red  
246 trim on the awning, "Food Mart" sign and protective bollards, and that the green band at  
247 the bottom of the sign match the industry standard for "diesel green".

248  
249 E. *Harmony of materials, colors, and composition of those sides of a structure, which are*  
250 *visible simultaneously;*

251  
252 Response: See previous response D.

253  
254 F. *Consistency of composition and treatment;*

255  
256 Response: The proposed sign reflects a consistent application of colors and/or materials  
257 on both of its sides.

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

262  
263 Response: Existing landscaped areas will be retained and planted with appropriate  
264 plantings. No trees will be removed as part of the project.

265  
266 H. *Whether exterior lighting, design signs and graphics are compatible with the overall*  
267 *design approach and appropriate for the setting;*

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

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

274  
275 Response: No additional improvements are required to bring the site into conformance  
276 with current development standards.

277  
278 J. *Whether the design promotes a high design standard and utilizes quality materials*  
279 *compatible with the surrounding development consistent with and appropriate for the*  
280 *nature of the proposed use;*

281  
282 Response: As described in the above findings, the proposed sign design, color and  
283 materials are compatible with development in the surrounding area and will improve  
284 aesthetic conditions at the subject intersection.

285  
286 K. *Responsible use of natural and reclaimed resources.*

287  
288 Response: This proposed project does not involve or propose use of natural or  
289 reclaimed resources.

290

291 **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

292  
293 Staff has determined that the proposed project is Categorically Exempt from the requirements of  
294 the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15303 (Construction of  
295 Small Structures) of the CEQA Guidelines.

296

297 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

298  
299 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission approve Design Review (DR 2009-03) to allow  
300 installation of a 31.5 square foot gasoline pricing sign at the gas station located at 1108 Lincoln  
301 Avenue (APN 011-254-003) within the “DC-DD”, Downtown Commercial-Design District Overlay  
302 Zoning District, subject to conditions of approval.

303

304 **ATTACHMENTS**

- 305  
306 1. Vicinity Map  
307 2. Resolution PC 2011-13  
308 3. Figure LU-6 and Corresponding Narrative: Entry Corridors  
309 4. Proposed Sign and Site Plan

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311  
312 NOTE: The applicant or any interested person is reminded that the Calistoga Municipal Code  
313 provides for a ten (10) calendar day appeal period. If there is a disagreement with the Planning  
314 Commission, an appeal to the City Council may be filed. The appropriate forms and applicable fee  
315 must be submitted prior to 5:00 p.m. on or before the tenth calendar day following the  
316 Commission's final determination.

317

318