

CALISTOGA PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

To: Calistoga Planning Commission
From: Zach Tusinger, Planning & Building Director
Meeting Date: May 13, 2020
Subject: **Sign Permit Application for the 76 Gas and Food Mart at 1202 Foothill Boulevard**

ITEM

Consideration of a sign permit application for the 76 Gas Station and Food Mart.

KEY ISSUES

- Replacement of existing internally lit monument sign with new sign featuring internal illumination and LED prices.
- Modifications to colors of sign and station canopies.

BACKGROUND

1 76 Gas Station and Food Mart at 1202 Lincoln Avenue (APN 011-252-004) has applied
2 for a sign permit to replace the existing monument sign at the corner of Lincoln Avenue
3 and Foothill Boulevard. The new sign would be the same 12' 9" height of the existing
4 sign. A key feature of the new sign would be LED prices. Additional paint modifications
5 are also planned for the project, primarily the inclusion of more orange accents on the
6 canopies above the gas station pumps. No changes to total sign area or the location of
7 the sign are planned.

8 While sign permits are generally reviewed at staff level, there are some types of sign
9 permits that either are required to go to the Planning Commission for review, or which
10 are unique and staff elects to refer to the Planning Commission for the final decision.

DISCUSSION

Zoning Code

13 Review of this application is subject to Chapter 17.58, Signs and Advertising, of the
14 Zoning Code. The purpose of this chapter is to:

15 (A) provide standards for the regulation of signs in order to promote and protect
16 the public health, safety and welfare;

17 (B) provide for signage that effectively presents a business name or message for
18 public convenience, while also preserving and enhancing the scenic beauty of
19 Calistoga as an economic asset; and

20 (C) prevent excessive and confusing signs which can result in visual clutter and
21 increase hazards to pedestrians and motorists. (CMC 17.58.010)

22 The Sign Code does not specifically address LED signs like those proposed here.
23 However, “neon and interior illuminated signs” may only be approved by the Planning
24 Commission (CMC Section 17.58.060.B(11)). Under CMC Section 17.58.060.A, the
25 Planning and Building Director may also refer any sign permit application to the
26 Planning Commission for review. The LED and interior lighting necessitates such a
27 referral in this case.

28 In terms of design requirements for neon and interior illuminated signs, Section
29 17.58.070 says that:

30 *A. For neon signs, their design shall be required to complement the*
31 *architectural character of the building and adjoining structures relating to*
32 *design, light intensity, color and other similar design characteristics, and*
33 *shall not be illuminated when a business is closed...).*

34 *B. For interior illuminated signs, their design shall be required to*
35 *complement the architectural character of the building and adjoining*
36 *structures relating to design, light intensity, color and other similar design*
37 *characteristics.*

38 It should be noted that while the 76 Gas Station is a formula business, the formula
39 business ordinance is at not at issue here. There is no proposed change to the use of
40 the property, rather it is an update to signage and paint related to the business’
41 branding.

42 In order to maintain and enhance Calistoga’s small-town character and the urban
43 design quality of the downtown, development in the DC: Downtown Commercial Zoning
44 District is to be guided by relevant policies of the General Plan’s Community Identity
45 Element and the character areas, gateways and entry corridors of the Land Use
46 Element.

47 Calistoga General Plan

48 The Community Identity
49 Element of the General
50 Plan states that “attention
51 to urban design criteria can
52 help ensure that future
53 development fits within the
54 existing built environment
55 and permit the continued
56 growth of Calistoga in a
57 manner which maintains its
58 existing small-town
59 atmosphere. Landscaping,
60 signage, traffic and noise
61 all play a key role in



62 enhancing the quality of life.”

63 The subject property is
64 located in the Downtown

Lincoln/Foothill Gateway

65 Character Area’s Lincoln/Foothill Gateway. The Lincoln/Foothill Area has a distinct and
66 different development pattern than the Historic Downtown. It presently consists of two
67 gas stations, a small inn, two homes operating as bed & breakfast inns, a small spa, a
68 BBQ restaurant, automotive repair shop, a retail/service store, local market, and a small
69 apartment complex.

70 The objectives of the Lincoln/Foothill area are to:

- 71 • Convey a “sense of arrival”
- 72 • Enhance circulation
- 73 • Minimize traffic congestion and carbon emissions
- 74 • Incorporate it as part of an anchor to the Downtown
- 75 • Provide safe access to and from State Highways 29 and 128, the Kortum Canyon
76 area, the Downtown and all surrounding services
- 77 • Continue to preserve current low levels of noise to maintain the City’s rural
78 atmosphere

79 The Urban Design Plan indicates that in terms of land use and architectural design in
80 the Foothill/Gateway Area:

- 81 • Gas stations may remain but should be encouraged to enhance the aesthetic
82 appearance of their facilities.
- 83 • It is critical to enhance the appearance of the properties in this area and to
84 improve it with greater coordination with respect to access, parking and
85 circulation.
- 86 • Encourage the gas stations at the Lincoln/Foothill intersection to maintain their
87 facilities in a clean and orderly fashion. Encourage building improvements as well
88 as more subtle and tasteful signage, lighting and landscaping.

89 The Land Use Element of the General Plan includes ‘Dark Sky’ policies as development
90 and design considerations. Outdoor lighting is to be designed to preserve and protect
91 the nighttime environment in accordance with the following International Dark Sky
92 Association model ordinance objectives:

- 93 • Provide the minimum lighting level necessary for night-time safety, utility,
94 security, productivity, enjoyment, and commerce.
- 95 • Minimize adverse offsite impacts such as sky glow, light overspill and obtrusive
96 light.
- 97 • Conserve energy and resources to the greatest extent possible.

98 At issue is whether the proposed signage is in accordance with the various policies of
99 the General Plan and Urban Design Plan, as well as the Zoning Ordinance. It should be

100 noted that neither of the other two service stations in Calistoga currently use LED prices
101 on their signs.

102 **RECOMMENDATION**

103 Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the proposed sign design
104 application and either approve, approve with conditions, or decline to approve the
105 application.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Application Materials
2. Draft Resolution with Conditions of Approval