



Administrative Report

J.1., File # PC21-2487

Meeting Date: 5/20/2021

To: PLANNING COMMISSION

From: STACEY KINSELLA, ASSOCIATE PLANNER

TITLE

PUBLIC HEARING FOR CONSIDERATION OF AN EXEMPTION DECLARATION, CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT, PLANNING COMMISSION DESIGN REVIEW, AND VARIANCE TO ALLOW THE INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF A HYDROGEN FUELING STATION WITH A REDUCTION IN THE PARKING REQUIREMENT FOR AN EXISTING AUTOMOBILE SERVICE STATION ON PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN A COMMERCIAL (C-2) ZONE.

APPLICANT: FIELDER GROUP

ADDRESS: **2714 ARTESIA BOULEVARD**

CASE NOS: CUP-2021-01; PCDR-2021-01; VAR-2021-01

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open public hearing and administer oath;
2. Take testimony from staff, applicant, and interested parties;
3. Close public hearing and deliberate; and
4. Adopt a resolution by title only approving the request subject to the findings and conditions contained therein:

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF REDONDO BEACH, CALIFORNIA, APPROVING AN EXEMPTION DECLARATION, CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT, PLANNING COMMISSION DESIGN REVIEW, AND VARIANCE TO ALLOW THE INSTALLATION AND OPERATION OF A NEW HYDROGEN FUELING STATION AND RELATED EQUIPMENT WITH A REDUCTION IN THE PARKING REQUIREMENT AT AN EXISTING SERVICE STATION ON PROPERTY LOCATED WITHIN A COMMERCIAL (C-2) ZONE AT 2714 ARTESIA BOULEVARD

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting approval to construct and operate a new hydrogen fueling station and related equipment at the existing service station located at 2714 Artesia Boulevard. The existing site is 25,952 square feet in size and currently includes a convenience store, four (4) service bays, and six (6) dual-sided gas pump islands. There is an existing canopy that resides over the gas pump islands. The new hydrogen fueling station would include a pump island with two (2) dispensers, a canopy above the island, and various equipment with vent stacks. In addition to the pump island, there would be a new detached equipment enclosure housing the station modules, supply cabinets, and various valves and vents.

This commercial site is within the C-2 Commercial Zone which conditionally allows improvements to existing service stations. The project requires the approval of a Conditional Use Permit, Planning Commission Design Review, and a Variance for reduced parking.

The applicant has provided architectural drawings and renderings to further depict the proposed work. The applicant has also provided a parking study as well as an acoustical analysis.

BACKGROUND

Location and Surrounding Uses

The project site is a rectangular-shaped parcel located at the southeastern corner of Artesia and Inglewood Boulevards. The site is zoned Commercial C-2 and has functioned as a gas station since 1969. The property to the east includes a retail tire store, the property to the north and across Artesia in the City of Lawndale includes a quick-service restaurant, and the property to the west and across Inglewood includes a retail flower shop and business offices. The property to the south is Zoned R-3 and consists of multi-family residential units which face Vanderbilt Lane.

Site History

The service station was first constructed in 1969 by Humble Oil Company. City records do not reflect a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the original station, however, the signage for the station did process for approvals. In 1987, a CUP was granted and in 1989, Exxon removed and rebuilt the service station. Another CUP was granted for the site in 1994 to address the remediation of the petroleum-impacted soil. Resolutions 7079 and 8186 are attached for reference.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The applicant is requesting approval to construct and operate a new hydrogen fueling pump island and a detached equipment enclosure. The project would disturb approximately 4,963 square feet of land. The pump island would include two (2) hydrogen dispensers, a 21-foot high canopy, and related equipment and vents. The detached equipment enclosure would include the station modules, supply cabinets, and various valves and vents.

Pump Island

The pump island would be located near the northwestern corner of the lot adjacent to the existing planter and behind the corner signage. Per Municipal Code Section 10-2.1602(b)(3), new gas station pump islands are required to be a minimum 16 feet from the adjacent property lines. The closest dispenser would be approximately 16.5 feet to the nearest property line and the canopy columns would be approximately 20.8 feet to the nearest property line. The canopy would be 21 feet in overall height and 586 square feet in size. There would be 30 feet clear between the new pump island and the nearest existing pump island to the east. There would also be new vent stacks at 26 feet in height.

Per Code Section 10-2.1524(d)(1), corner lots must maintain a 15-foot triangular area of vehicular visibility. Given that the new pump island would meet the 16-foot minimum setback requirement and be located far behind the existing signage, the required corner of visibility will remain unimpeded.

Equipment Enclosure

The equipment enclosure would be located along the southern (rear) property line adjacent to the multi-family units facing Vanderbilt Lane. Per Code Section 10-2.1602(b)(8), small accessory structures are conditionally permitted in conjunction with a service station. As noted above, the Planning Commission granted a CUP for related equipment in the past. The hydrogen fueling equipment is similar in scope to the remediation equipment that was necessary in the past.

The equipment enclosure would be 1,388 square feet in size with 8-foot high exterior fencing. While equipment enclosures are not reviewed in the same manner as enclosed buildings, the proposed enclosure is setback 15 feet from Inglewood Boulevard. Per Code Section 10-2.622, the front setback for a commercial building in the C-2 Zone is 5 feet.

The main station modules would be approximately 12 feet in height and each would have a vent stack extending above the equipment. To further screen the equipment from the residential units to the south, the applicant is proposing an angled awning approximately 16.5 feet in height. There is a grade change between the gas station and the residential property, with the residential property being at the higher grade. Field measurements reflect a grade change of 6 feet at the sidewalk, but that increases considerably as the properties extend eastward. Sheet C2.1 shows that the proposed awning would be just below the existing rear fencing. Details C and D on Sheet C2.2 illustrate the side views and the grade changes between the two sites. Residents would not be able to see the equipment from the existing rear yards, but the awning may be visible from second story windows.

The proposed awning screens the main station modules and vents located towards the western side of the enclosure. There will be other valves, walls, and panels of varying heights within the enclosure which will be located further east in

the equipment area.

Parking

Per Municipal Code Section 10-2.1706, service stations are required to have one parking space for every 250 square feet of gross floor area, but not less than three (3) spaces for each service bay. If the station also has its own towing truck, then there needs to be one parking space for that truck. The existing convenience store is 853 square feet and the service bays are a total of 1,563 square feet. In total, the gas station has 2,416 square feet of gross floor area which would require seven (7) parking spaces. That said, there are four (4) service bays and each require three (3) parking spaces. Thus, the existing site is required to have 12 parking spaces. The existing site provides 13 spaces along the southern property line. According to the applicant, the gas station does not have any in-house tow trucks, thus, no additional parking is needed for that use.

The new 1,388 square foot equipment enclosure would, unfortunately, remove the majority of those parking spaces along the southern property line. Only five (5) parking spaces would remain and the applicant proposes two (2) additional parking spaces parallel to Artesia Boulevard. In total, seven (7) parking spaces would be provided.

Staff requested that the applicant provide a parking study to analyze the existing site and assess if the revised parking would be able to support the station. The parking study reflects counts taken during two weekdays and two weekend days in November 2020. Peak operating hours for the gas station were considered to be 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., thus, counts were taken over the four days from 1:30 to 5:30 p.m. Counts were recorded in 5-minute intervals and assessed a variety of patron activities including fueling, the use of the convenience store, and the use of the service station. Tables 1 through 4 included in the parking study reflect a maximum of six (6) parking spaces utilized at any one time. The parking study notes that the two (2) hydrogen fueling dispensers are not expected to shift the existing activities at the site. Thus, it is expected that only six parking spaces are needed even after the hydrogen fueling station is in operation. It is also important to note that in many cases, patrons obtained fuel for their cars then utilized the convenience store. The vehicle remained at the pump as temporary parking, leaving the remaining parking spaces open for non-fueling services. Based upon the parking study and its operational counts, it appears that the site may be supported with the reduced parking. Lastly, the City Traffic Engineer has reviewed the study and found it be adequate for the proposed project.

Given that the site can support the reduced parking, that there is the need for environmentally-friendly fueling options in the South Bay, and there may not be an existing gas station that is a perfect fit to incorporate a new hydrogen fueling pump station, the request for a Variance appears justified.

Acoustical Analysis

Per Municipal Code Section 4-24.301(c), when the noise measurement is located along the boundary between two different land uses, the lower noise level limit shall be utilized plus five (5) decibels. In this case, the multi-family (R-3) units to the south are the lower noise level at 55 dB between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. From 10:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., the presumed ambient noise level per Code 50 dB.

The acoustical analysis provided by the applicant's team utilizes noise propagation modeling which inputs the terrain, the built environment, and the existing traffic counts for both Artesia and Inglewood Boulevards, among other external factors. The modeling also includes the two (2) station modules within the equipment enclosure and the two (2) vents stacks located adjacent to the dispensers within the proposed pump island. The station modules operate for up to 30 minutes per hour and the vent stacks operate after each customer fuels which is expected to be every 5-10 minutes at full capacity.

The analysis reflects daytime hourly ambient noise levels adjacent to the residential to be in the range of 59 to 70 dBA. At nighttime, the analysis shows ambient sound levels at 51 to 62 dBA. Based upon the modeling as well as the use of the awning and wall at the equipment enclosure for noise mitigation, the acoustical analysis anticipates that nighttime noise levels will only increase by one (1) dB.

Landscape and Signage

Two existing trees within the planter space parallel to Artesia Boulevard are noted to be removed. Staff is suggesting a condition of approval that the applicant provide replacement trees and that landscaping within all of the existing planters be improved as part of the project.

Per Code Section 10-2.1810(g)(1), signage on the pump island canopy shall not exceed 15% "of the canopy fascia area

facing each street frontage." Conceptual signage is shown on Sheet A1.0 which merely states the company name and the hydrogen station label. A condition of approval is included in the attached Resolution noting that final signage shall meet the 15% requirement stated above.

EVALUATION OF REQUEST:

General Plan

The subject property is zoned C-2 which is consistent with the Commercial C-2 General Plan Designation. The General Plan policies for this zone encourage a mix of uses such as retail, office, and other similar resident-serving commercial services. With Artesia Boulevard being the main commercial corridor within the northern portion of Redondo Beach, the General Plan highlights this area as being "highway" commercial development. The existing gas station and its expansion to include environmentally-friendly hydrogen fuel fits well within this main commercial corridor.

Conditional Use Permit

The purpose of a Conditional Use Permit is to review certain uses possessing unique characteristics and to ensure that the establishment of those uses will not adversely affect surrounding uses nor disrupt the orderly development of the community. Approval of a Conditional Use Permit must generally meet certain criteria specified in Section 10-2.2506 of the Municipal Code. The criteria include the following:

1. *The site for the proposed use shall be in conformity with the General Plan and shall be adequate in size and shape to accommodate such use and all setbacks, spaces, walls and fences, parking, loading, landscaping, and other features required by this chapter to adjust such use with the land and uses in the neighborhood.*

The existing gas station meets the intent of the General Plan goals and policies by providing a resident-serving commercial use along a major highway corridor. By providing hydrogen fueling at the gas station, this use will not only be expanded but also environmentally-friendly which serves the whole of the community.

Many of the development standards outlined for the C-2 Zone were addressed as part of the original gas station development. The new pump island will meet the 16-foot required setback, the canopy will be below the 30-foot building height limit, and the new equipment enclosure will have fencing 8 feet in height. The parking study reflects that the site has the ability to accommodate the new pump island, the new equipment enclosure, and still serve the existing service station.

2. *The site for the proposed use shall have adequate access to a public street or highway of adequate width and pavement to carry the quantity and kind of traffic generated by the proposed use.*

The project site abuts Artesia and Inglewood Boulevards. The site has three (3) vehicular entry points, one along Inglewood Boulevard and two driveways accessible from Artesia Boulevard. The hydrogen fueling station would not result in a discernable change to the existing traffic at the gas station. With the new offering of hydrogen fuel, existing drivers of gas vehicles would have the option to utilize an alternative-fuel vehicle.

3. *The proposed use shall have no adverse effect on abutting property or the permitted use thereof.*

Land uses to the east, north, and west are currently commercial. The property to the south is an existing multi-family site (R-3) which sits several feet higher than the existing gas station. With this grade change and the addition of the awning above the station modules, the rear residential units are expected to have little to no visual impairment. The acoustical analysis indicates that daytime

and nighttime noise levels will only increase by one (1) dB.

4. *The conditions stated in the resolution or design considerations integrated into the project shall be deemed necessary to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare. Such conditions may include but shall not be limited to:*

The conditions of approval stated in the resolution are crafted to protect the public health, safety, and general welfare and to achieve development in an orderly and efficient manner in conformity with the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. A good example of this is the condition regarding improved ADA pathways at the site.

Planning Commission Design Review

Pursuant to Section 10-2.2502 of the Municipal Code, any new commercial, industrial, mixed use or public development of any size on a site involving more than 10,000 square feet of land, requires Planning Commission Design Review (PCDR). The purpose of the design review is to look at the compatibility, originality, variety, and innovation in the architecture, design, landscaping, and site planning of the project. The purpose of the review is also to protect surrounding property values, prevent blight and deterioration of neighborhoods, promote sound land use, design excellence, and protect the overall health, safety, and welfare of the City. The criteria for PCDR are as follows:

- 1. User impact and needs.** *The design of the project shall consider the impact and the needs of the user in respect to circulation, parking, traffic, utilities, public services, noise and odor, privacy, private and common open spaces, trash collection, security and crime deterrence, energy consumption, physical barriers, and other design concerns.*

The project maintains the 18-foot minimum driveway aisles required for two-way traffic within the site. The hydrogen station pump island will be 30 feet to the nearest existing gas dispenser to the east. The three (3) existing driveways will continue to provide clear ingress/egress to the station. The parking study indicates that only a maximum of six (6) parking spaces were utilized at any one time, thus, the proposed seven (7) parking spaces are adequate for the improved fueling station. While not normally included in the parking counts, each pump island serves as temporary parking for those patrons who obtain gas and utilize the convenience store in the same visit.

- 2. Relationship to physical features.** *The location of buildings and structures shall respect the natural terrain of the site and shall be functionally integrated with any natural features of the landscape to include the preservation of existing trees, where feasible.*

The site has been developed with a service station since the late 1960s, thus, there is no natural terrain at the site. Two existing trees within a planter adjacent to Artesia Boulevard would be removed as part of this project. Staff has proposed a landscaping condition requesting replacement trees and improved landscaping with the other existing planter areas.

- 3. Consistency of architectural style.** *The building or structure shall be harmonious and consistent within the proposed architectural style regarding roofing, materials, windows, doors, openings, textures, colors, and exterior treatment.*

The proposed canopy above the hydrogen fueling pump would have a modern, sleek design.

Renderings indicate that the canopy would be angled with white and green accents. While this is in contrast to the existing gas station and its solid red-tile roof, the new design highlights the potential future of fueling and helps advertise the new fuel offering. The equipment enclosure would have various earth tones. The awning above the station modules is shown to match the green color in the pump island canopy.

4. Balance and integration with the neighborhood. *The overall design shall be integrated and compatible with the neighborhood and shall strive to be in harmony with the scale and bulk of surrounding properties.*

The canopy above the pump island would be 21 feet in height and the canopy above the station modules within the equipment enclosure would be 16.5 feet in height. Both structures would be below the 30-foot maximum allowed building height. Furthermore, with the grade change between the gas station and the rear residential property, the rear residential units would most likely have little to no visual impacts. There are no foreseen impacts to the adjacent commercial uses.

5. Building design. *The design of buildings and structures shall strive to provide innovation, variety, and creativity in the proposed design solution. All architectural elevations shall be designed to eliminate the appearance of flat facades or boxlike construction.*

The canopy above the proposed pump island would be futuristic in design which ties into the theme of new environmentally-friendly fueling options. The equipment enclosure is simple and industrial which is appropriate for a gas station.

6. Signs. *Signs and sign programs shall meet the criteria established in Sign Regulation Criteria, Section 10-5.1802.*

The conceptual signage on the canopy is minimal and would not exceed the maximum 15% of the canopy fascia area.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The applicant was encouraged to perform early outreach to neighboring properties, particularly the rear residential units facing Vanderbilt Lane. A letter was mailed to all properties within a 300-foot radius earlier this year. Neither the applicant nor the City received any public comments.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS:

The proposed project is Categorically Exempt from further environmental analysis pursuant to Section 15303 of the Guidelines to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution
Exemption Declaration
Resolution 7079 - CUP for station
Resolution 8186 - CUP for soil vapor
Applications

Site Photos

Architectural Drawings

Parking Study

Acoustical Analysis

Equipment enclosure Photos

Rendering - Corner View

Rendering - Side view