Item 1: SHELL GAS STATION
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW AND SIGN PERMIT
2401 PLEASANT HILL ROAD
PLN 19-0183

Project Planner: Andrew Shiflet, (925) 671-5211, ashiflet@pleasanthillca.org

Owner: Petromart Retail Group, Inc., 2401 Pleasant Hill Rd., Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

Applicant: Sal Pablo, Sign Development Inc., 1366 W. Ninth St., Upland, CA 91786

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Project Description

Public hearing to review an Architectural Review and Sign Permit for exterior modifications for an existing gas station at 2401 Pleasant Hill Rd. that is undergoing a Shell brand update. The project proposes the following:

- A new fascia, fascia color, building color and signage on the existing food mart building;
- Branding update to existing monument signs and gas pumps; and,
- Replacing the gas station canopy fascia with a new externally illuminated fascia 36 inches in height and new internally illuminated signage on two sides.

No other exterior improvements are proposed for the existing gas station.

B. Background

Shell has occupied this site for many years. The gas station has existed with its current style of architecture since 1990.

In July 2003, the ARC held a study session to review a proposal to make exterior modifications to the existing gas station. The specific changes included new signage for the buildings, gas pumps, canopy and monument signs. The proposal also included a new “international” paint scheme for the existing buildings, including painting all existing brick white and replacing the existing fascia with acrylic plastic painted yellow with red stripes. The Commission reviewed the proposed paint change and building signage within the context of the buildings’ architecture and the existing
commercial and residential setting in which the building is located. The overall consensus of the Commission was to retain the existing look and feel of the existing gas station architecturally and only make minor alterations to the buildings and the site.

In November 2003, the ARC approved a toned-down version of the changes proposed for the site which were in keeping with the Commissions desires mentioned above, and can be viewed today.

C. Project Location

The project site is located at 2401 Pleasant Hill Rd. The site is located at the northwest corner of Pleasant Hill Rd. and Grayson Rd./Gregory Ln. Assessor Parcel Number: 164-131-027.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. General Plan

The General Plan designates the site as Neighborhood Business.

B. Zoning

The existing zoning designation is NB-Neighborhood Business.

C. Site Description and Existing Land Use

The site is currently developed with an existing gas station with a food mart building and canopy over the multiple gas pumps. Access to the site is off of both Pleasant Hill Rd. to the east and Grayson Rd. to the south. The site is developed and relatively flat.

D. Surrounding Zoning and Uses

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<td>NB &amp; PUD519</td>
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E. CEQA Status

Pursuant to Section 15301 and 15311 of the Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended, this
project is determined to qualify for a Class 1 and 11 categorical exemption, which applies to existing facilities and accessory structures, in this case a proposal to install new signage, colors, and fascia’s on an existing gas station building and canopy. No expansion is proposed, either to the building or to the number of gas pumps.

F. Public Notice

Public notice of the meeting date was mailed to all property owners within 300 feet of the project site. Notice of the meeting was posted at City Hall.

II. NECESSARY FINDINGS

A. Purpose

The purpose of architectural review is to evaluate the interdependence of property values and aesthetics, and to provide a method to promote sound land use development. More specifically, architectural review is intended to:

1. Ensure excellence of architectural design;
2. Ensure that siting and architectural design of structures, including their materials and colors, are visually harmonious with surrounding development and with the natural landforms and vegetation of the areas in which they are proposed to be located;
3. Ensure that plans for the landscaping of open spaces conform with the requirements of Section 18.115.010.B and that they provide visually pleasing settings for structures on the site and on adjoining and nearby sites, and blend harmoniously with the natural landscape;
4. Prevent excessive and unsightly grading of hillsides, and preserve natural landforms and existing vegetation; and,
5. Ensure substantial conformance with the City’s Design Guidelines.

The Architectural Review Commission will also consider the following elements in evaluating a sign permit application:

1. Ensure sign visibility and legibility, including letter height and legibility, contrast background relationship, placement and location, and the impact of other signs in the vicinity, and the average travel speed on adjacent streets.
2. Intensity of sign illumination of both the proposed sign and other signs in the vicinity, and other light sources such as street lights or canopy lights.
3. The relation of the signs to the architectural design of the building. An attractive scale between the sign, the building and the immediate surroundings shall be maintained.

4. Ensure the graphic design of a sign, including emphasis on simplicity, style, trademarks or business identification and use of symbols.

5. Ensure substantial conformance with the City’s Sign Design Guidelines.

III. ANALYSIS

A. Building and Gas Station Canopy Modifications

Gas Station Canopy

The applicant is proposing to:
- Paint the canopy columns Shell White, with 12 inch Shell Gray band at the bottom.
- Install 36 inch tall ACM panel over existing fascia. ACM panel to be Shell Yellow with Shell White background. Each fascia to be externally illuminated by LEDs in Shell Red bar which is offset from fascia approximately 4-6 inches.
- Install two 48 inch by 48 inch Shell pecten logo signs on canopy fascia. One sign on northeast elevation, facing Pleasant Hill Rd., and the second sign on the southwest elevation, facing Grayson Rd.
- Paint bumper poles Shell White with 12 inch Shell Gray band at bottom, paint island forms Shell Gray

The replacement fascia is approximately equal in height to the existing fascia. No work is planned for the roof. Staff recommends conditioning the project to include a re-roof of the gas station canopy as the existing roofing material is showing significant signs of wear (Condition 1.0).

Note: Historically, the Commission has had concerns with the incorporation of LED or light banding on buildings. This concern was due in part to its visual appearance and the long term durability of banding remaining in place and not becoming an uneven illuminated banding which could detract from the visual appearance of the site. Thus, staff requests the Commission to provide input and feedback on this project feature.

Food Mart Building & Trash Enclosure

The applicant is proposing to:

Food Mart
- Paint the front and two sides of the food mart structure *Shell White* with a 12 inch *Shell Gray* band at the bottom.
- Install new 30 inch tall ACM panel over the existing fascia. ACM panel to be *Shell White*, except over storefront, where it will have “Food Mart” signage and *Shell Red* and *Shell Yellow* stripes.
- Paint window frames and mullions *Shell Silver*.
- Paint curbs in front of food mart structure *Safety Yellow*.

The replacement fascia would not be any taller than the existing fascia, with changes limited to a new color for the building and fascia and new signage copy over entrance. No work is planned for the roof, however staff recommends the Commission discuss the challenges of matching new roofing at the canopy with the existing roofing at the food mart, and whether it would be appropriate to include reroofing the food mart building in Condition 1.0 to improve the overall appearance of the site.

**Trash Enclosure**

- Paint trash enclosure’s brick-face walls *Shell White* with 12” *Shell Gray* at bottom
- Paint trash enclosure’s doors *Shell Gray*

The applicant has not proposed any modifications to the wood trellis structure spanning over the trash enclosure. This wood structure, along with the brick-face walls, match the existing monument sign structures located along Pleasant Hill Rd. and Grayson Rd. The applicant is, however, proposing to leave the brick-face columns at the monument structures as-is (instead of painting them white to match the food mart and trash enclosure) and to repaint the wood trellises like-for-like (beige tone color).

**B. Signage**

**Food Mart Building**

The applicant proposes to remove the existing “Food Mart” lettering and replace it with a new 14 inch tall “Food Mart” lettering. The new sign would be 9.6 square feet. The allowable sign area for this building is 38 square feet, based on the building lineal footage. Thus, the proposed size area would comply with ordinance allowances.

**Gas Station Canopy**

The applicant proposes to remove the “Shell” internally illuminated individual lettering signs and replace with them with Shell’s pecten logo cabinet in the same general locations as the previous signage. The internally illuminated logo cabinets
are proposed on two elevations, the southeast and northwest. Each logo cabinet would be approximately 8 square feet and does not appear to be too large or out of balance with the canopy fascia.

An illuminated sign is proposed to be installed on the southwest elevation of the canopy fascia. While it would not directly face residential areas, residences to the west would have a clear view of this illuminated sign. The zoning ordinance does not allow signage to be illuminated during the hours of 10:00pm to 6:00am, except when the business is open. This gas station is open 24 hours a day, thus, the signs would be illuminated during all hours of the day creating potential concerns for these residences. The Commission could consider limiting illumination of this sign, thus, staff is requesting input on this proposal.

Monument Sign

The applicant proposes to replace the sign face/copy within the existing monument sign structures, which each consist of two, approximately 6-foot tall, brick-faced columns with a wood trellis structure spanning from column to column. No changes to dimensions are proposed and the structures will be repainted like-for-like. The only changes are to sign face colors (removing gray background color and replacing with white) and to the sign display method (replacing physical pricing digits that are manually inserted into sign face with electronic LED light display). Staff recommends the Commission condition the project to have the sign with an adjustable setting in relation to the intensity/brightness of the monument sign’s LED lighting system, allowing the Zoning Administrator to require future adjustments be made to reduce brightness in the event that the lighting level intensity is found to be too high (see Condition 1.1).

C. City Wide Design Guidelines

- **City Wide Non-Residential Design Guidelines 2.c.i** – Building facades should incorporate architectural features, change in elevation, insets and projections to discourage monotonous facades, long straight-line building fronts, and plain box shapes. The applicant proposes to replace an existing fascia with another fascia that has a long horizontal edge that does not provide any articulation for the building. However, this type of design is typical for a service station.

- **City Wide Non-Residential Design Guidelines 2.0** – Corporate colors and materials should be minimized where possible and should relate to the existing surrounding neighborhood & appropriate colors should be used on buildings. The proposed colors are the Shell corporate color scheme. The existing building fascia incorporates muted beige colors to help minimize its appearance, however, the proposed solid white color could accentuate the
building and fascia. The proposed fascia on the canopy would be white with yellow and red banding around all sides. Use of LED light banding has historically been discouraged by the Commission.

Sign Design Guidelines

- **Sign Design Guideline C.1** – Signs are an advertising medium. Signage should be considered as elements of attractive and high quality design. The sign face panel appears to be of good quality and would be mounted on the existing sign structure. The design of the sign face panel is subject to ARC review to determine if it can be determined consistent with this guideline.

- **Sign Design Guideline C.3** – Signs should efficiently advertise the business so that passers-by can readily understand the message. The proposed signage would be easily readable due to its location on an existing monument sign and would be on two sides of the existing gas station canopy facing the adjacent streets.

- **Sign Design Guideline C.5** – Signs should not, by their appearance or size, dominate or overpower the setting, or be visually obtrusive. They should complement the visual character of the setting where they are located, whether it is a street frontage or storefront. Also, **Sign Design Guideline G.1** – The text and information on a sign should be easy to understand and read, without being visually obtrusive or overpowering. The signs proposed would be sized in proportion to the architectural features on which they would be placed (building, monument sign and gas station canopy) and would identify the business or building use.

- **Sign Design Guideline D.1 & D.5** – Individual channel letters are strongly encouraged for signs on new commercial and retail and cabinet signs are acceptable if they have been previously used in an existing setting. The proposed signage on the canopy includes internally illuminated individual channel lettering. However, the building sign is proposed to be an illuminated cabinet sign that would replace an existing cabinet sign.

- **Sign Design Guidelines F.1** – The design, materials, construction and installation should reflect a high quality visual appearance. The proposed signage would be consistent with this guideline.

- **Sign Design Guideline H.2** – The recommended margin is one-fifth of the height of the surface to which the sign copy is attached. The proposed sign cabinet on the canopy would exceed 100% of the fascia surface, thus, exceeding the 20% top and bottom margin recommended by this guideline. However, as proposed the Shell pecten logo leaves approximately 20% margins at the top
and bottom of the logo cabinet, and does not appear disproportionate to the fascia area.

- **Sign Design Guideline I.1** – To enhance daytime visibility, sign letters should be light colored on a dark background. The proposed signage would be dark colored lettering on a lighter background; therefore, not consistent with this guideline. However, this is the corporate color scheme for Shell.

- **Sign Design Guideline I.2 and I.3** – Sign colors should be simple and basic and trim caps should be dark-colored and not include hard-to-read fonts/styles. The proposed signage would have multiple colors, however, this is the business logo. The proposed lettering of the signs is an easy-to-read font.

- **Sign Design Guideline L.6** – The materials, colors, textures, finish and overall design of the monument sign should strongly incorporate the same design features from the associated building or the architectural setting. The proposed monument sign would only incorporate a new sign face using colors that would match those on the building and gas station canopy. The monument structure itself (brick-faced columns and wood trellis structure) is proposed to be repainted like-for-like.

V. CONCLUSION

The applicant proposes new signage and fascia (and colors) for the branding update of the existing gas station. Changes are limited to new colors and new signage. The physical dimensions of the building, canopy and monument sign are not proposed to change. Issues for particular consideration by the Commission include the following:

- Use of an illuminated sign on the southwest elevation of the gas station canopy;
- Use of an illuminated LED band on the gas station canopy;
- Scale of canopy fascia signage;
- Potential inconsistencies with Sign Design Guidelines (dark letters on light background); and,
- Re-roofing food mart building and canopy structure with new composite shingle roofing material.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission review the proposal and provide direction on the issues raised in the staff report. If the Commission determines the project should be approved, staff recommends the Commission accept the categorical exemption from
CEQA and approve the Architectural Review and Sign Permit subject to the attached conditions of approval with any modifications that may be directed by the Commission.

VII. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A  Proposed Conditions of Approval
Attachment B  Location Map
Attachment C  Project Plans and Photos
Attachment D  Public Hearing Notice