

# ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 29, 2020



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 910 Mayer Avenue  
**Project Name:** OM Station  
**Application Type:** Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval  
**Legistar File ID #** [59925](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL APPROVAL. This property is located in the Industrial General (IG) District, and was the main office building for Oscar Mayer's development. This site is being rehabilitated for various businesses and uses, with the subject sign location serving as multi-tenant office suites. This property also falls within the boundaries of Urban Design District No. 4. This property abuts Commercial Avenue (2 lanes, 25 mph), Packers Avenue (6 lanes, 35 mph), and Aberg Avenue (2 lanes, 25 mph).

Pursuant to Section 31.043(4)(b), MGO, the UDC shall apply the following criteria upon review of an application for a Comprehensive Sign Plan:

1. *The Sign Plan shall create visual harmony between the signs, building(s), and building site through unique and exceptional use of materials, design, color, any lighting, and other design elements; and shall result in signs of appropriate scale and character to the uses and building(s) on the zoning lot as well as adjacent buildings, structures and uses.*
2. *Each element of the Sign Plan shall be found to be necessary due to unique or unusual design aspects in the architecture or limitations in the building site or surrounding environment; except that when a request for an Additional Sign Code Approval under Sec. 31.043(3) is included in the Comprehensive Design Review, the sign(s) eligible for approval under Sec. 31.043(3) shall meet the applicable criteria of Sec. 31.043(3), except that sign approvals that come to Comprehensive Design Review from MXC and EC districts pursuant to 31.13(3) and (7) need not meet the criteria of this paragraph.*
3. *The Sign Plan shall not violate any of the stated purposes described in Sec. 31.02(1) and 33.24(2).*
4. *All signs must meet minimum construction requirements under Sec. 31.04(5).*
5. *The Sign Plan shall not approve Advertising beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.11 or Off-Premise Directional Signs beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.115.*
6. *The Sign Plan shall not be approved if any element of the plan:*
  - a. *presents a hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic on public or private property,*
  - b. *obstructs views at points of ingress and egress of adjoining properties,*
  - c. *obstructs or impedes the visibility of existing lawful signs on adjacent property, or*
  - d. *negatively impacts the visual quality of public or private open space.*
7. *The Sign Plan may only encompass signs on private property of the zoning lot or building site in question, and shall not approve any signs in the right of way or on public property.*

Section 33.24(10)(c)4. indicates the Urban Design Commission shall consider in each case those of the following guidelines and requirements as may be appropriate to signage:

*Signs. The mixed land use patterns that characterize substantial portions of the district contribute to a proliferation of business and product identification signs which detract from the appearance of these areas.*

*a. Requirements.*

- i. Signs in the district shall conform to all provisions of [Chapter 31](#) of the Madison General Ordinances.*
- ii. Signs shall be integrated with the architecture of the building.*
- iii. Electronic changeable copy signs, if permitted in the District, shall comply with [Sec. 31.046\(1\)](#) which requires that electronic changeable copy signs in Urban Design Districts shall not alternate, change, fade in, fade out, or otherwise change more frequently than once every one (1) hour. Additionally, no sign or portion of sign shall change its level of illumination more than once every one (1) hour. (Am. by ORD-09-00091, 8-1-09)*
- iv. Signs along East Washington Avenue west of First Street shall not be so high or so large that they detract from the view of the State Capitol.*

*b. Guidelines.*

- i. A sign should identify the activity without imposing upon the view of residents, businesses or activities of the district.*
- ii. A sign should be appropriate to the type of activity and clientele at which its message is directed.*
- iii. Signs should be designed so as to be legible to the intended viewer in relation to the surrounding circumstances.*
- iv. Signs should avoid covering or impinging upon landscape features or significant structures.*
- v. Illuminated signs should be lit internally or from the ground, not with fixtures projecting from the signs.*
- vi. Internally illuminated signs displaying illuminated copy shall be designed in such a way so that when illuminated, the sign appears to have light-colored copy on a dark or non-illuminated background.*

**Signable Area defined in Sign Ordinance:** One designated area of the facade of the building up to the roof line that is free of doors, windows (for purposes of this definition, spandrel panels or other non-vision glass used as an exterior building material are not considered windows) or other major architectural detail, that extends no higher than the juncture of the wall and the roof.

**Proposed Wall Signage:** The proposed sign consists of individual channel letters that would be mounted on the soffit above the entry, and would sit in front of what appear to be non-vision windows, as well as project slightly below the soffit to give the appearance of coming through the building façade. The size of the sign would have a total net area of 82.17 sq. ft.

Staff Comments: While the architecture of the building provides other potential signable areas, the sign's proposed location is centered above the main entrance to the building, and is intended to create a sense of place for the development. The sign is of high quality design, having been uniquely designed to appear as though it will come through the building façade, using a trimless style letter face, as shown in the application material. The applicant also indicates that the proposed font used for the sign is one of the types used in a legacy label Oscar Mayer used, and this font type is intended to be used in other future signage used in the development, tying into the history of the property. However, the proposed location and unique design will make the sign cross architectural detail on the building, requiring CDR approval. The overall size of the sign appears to fit with the size and scale of the building. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Notes:

- All other signage shown in the CDR is for concept only and is not part of this approval.
- Any additional signage will require a CDR alteration, either by staff or the UDC.
- The final CDR documents shall state that all other signage not requiring permits shall comply with MGO 31.