

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

September 1, 2017



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 501 N. Henry Street
Project Name: Henry-Gilman Apartments
Application Type: Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval
Legistar File ID # 48449
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL APPROVAL. This property is located in a Planned Development (PD) district, which did not have a previously approved sign package. This is a 120 unit multi-family building, surrounded mostly by other properties with a multi-family building zoned either DR1 or DR2 (Group 1 in the sign ordinance).

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.

Permitted per Sign Ordinance

Type: Section 31.14(4), MGO, allows for identification sign indicating only the name and address of the building and the name of the management thereof. These signs shall be wall signs only, and as this building is on a corner lot, it would be allowed two identification signs, one facing each street. The wall sign could be placed at a maximum height of 12'.

Size: Any individual sign may not exceed 12 sq. ft. in area.

Proposed Signage

Type: The proposed sign is a ground-mounted monument sign, which is not permitted for a multi-family building in a Group 1 district. Only wall signs are allowed at multi-family buildings in Group 1 districts.

Height: The proposed sign would be 6' 9" tall. By comparison, ground signs for Nonresidential buildings in the DR1 and DR2 are limited to 4' in height, and ground signs at Residential Building Complexes are limited to 12' in height.

Size: The proposed sign would have a net area of 21.083 sq. ft. (5' 6" x 3' 10"), roughly the equivalency of having two otherwise permissible wall signs.

Staff Comments regarding the Decorative Banners: After further review, the Zoning Administrator has determined the proposed graphics on the banner are not considered a sign and are not regulated as signage or part of the review in this Comprehensive Design Review request. Instead, changes to the banners will be handled as architectural elements, reviewed as an Alteration to the Planned Development.

Staff Comments regarding the Ground Sign: The architectural design of the building presents challenges for wall sign placement, as the façade facing North Henry Street only has a narrow, recessed signable area and not an optimal place to put a sign that would be visible at 12 sq. ft. The façade that faces Gilman Street also has a limited signable area (the wall by the office/lobby space). The proposed ground sign resolves both of these issues, and if approved as a substitute of the otherwise permissible wall signs, is a reasonable solution to provide necessary signage for the development. Also, as the site plan did not show the location of the ground sign. The sign must be located outside of the cross-hatched intersection sight distance area approved by Traffic Engineering.

Staff Comments regarding the existing canopy sign: The existing above canopy sign is not compliant with the sign ordinance and has no record of ever having a sign permit, and it must be removed.

Staff recommends that if UDC does determine the conditions are met to approve this Comprehensive Design Review, that they apply a condition that the ground sign replace the option of having two wall signs, and require the removal of the illegal canopy sign.