



Agenda Item #: 3

Project Title: 1050 E. Washington Avenue - Amendment to an Existing Comprehensive Design Review (CDR) in Urban Design District (UDD) No. 8. 6th Ald. Dist.

Legistar File ID #: 70520

Members Present: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Christian Albouras, Jessica Klehr, Russell Knudson and Shane Bernau.

Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of April 13, 2022, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of an amendment to a Comprehensive Design Review located at 1050 E Washington Avenue in UDD No. 8. Registered and speaking in support was Dan Yoder, representing Sign Art Studio.

Yoder introduced the proposal, noting that a 2019 approval for the building did show potential signage areas. That was not a CDR approved sign package, but was included in the items along with the building approval. Signage for the Arden was to follow Chapter 31 sign code. They are asking to put signage as shown, as well as signage on the second floor in a signable area. They originally showed five signable areas on the second floor, which has been reduced to two signable areas that would now be code compliant. The signage type and size meets the ordinance, meets what UDD 8 has outlined and is in line with what was previously approved at the nearby Gebhardt building. The concern is that these aren't as clearly defined signable areas as what may be shown on other buildings, but he stipulated that they have satisfied the signable area per the ordinance, and that the sign is not overly large, noting that precedent has been set in this area.

Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Division Director gave an overview of the conditions related to the request, noting that CDR is a voluntary process to have a sign package approved for a development. This site and corridor is different in terms of the CDR criteria (sign code) and is within an Urban Design District. Various UDC secretaries have tried to maintain consistency along this corridor over the years. This is considered an extension of the Downtown with very few signs above the first story. The Commission should make a finding for sign placements and designs as they relate to the building architecture.

Discussion by the Commission was as follows:

- The reduced request from five signable areas to two, does that include the requested one for Fetch and one other?
 - Yes.
- It seems like it should be one rectangle down from where it is. The remaining allowable area is above the 3rd floor?
 - That would be in the future if occupancy got split.
- We might identify appropriate signable areas, maybe not the same two locations forever and always. This is an Urban Design District issue and what was intended with the original design, and what we're comfortable with not crossing architectural features.

- (Secretary) There is currently one tenant occupying the entire second floor. We don't know how many tenants will occupy the third floor, how do you limit for tenant spaces and future tenant spaces? Co-locating projecting signage would be one option.
- My gut feeling is to minimize the amount of sign clutter on the face of this building. It's a shame they didn't build an obvious sign location into the building.
- Clarify two street facing sign areas above the first floor and define where they are. The UDC is saying signable areas above the first floor, you're allowed two of them, here's where we want to see them.
- Whether there should be any, or just be projecting signs that are potentially multi-tenant, like the Galaxie and the Spark further to the southwest.
- When we first saw this project there were two very distinct vertical metal panel elements on either side of the main entrance where there's only one now. We have to carefully consider where we'd recommend a vertical sign to not cross over the glass, but it could be done.
- It looks kind of cluttered and out of place on E Washington Avenue now. The Gebhardt was considered a unique condition and not precedent setting. We should think carefully about where we permit signs on this building. Other property owners will wonder what's going on.
- If more tenants occupy the second floor and want more signage, a couple of businesses have put signage in their windows, one on the second floor. How does that apply? Is that an option here if more tenants come, but that's a concern because that's getting really cluttered?
 - (Tucker) Window signage is allowed per ordinance, doesn't require a permit, and is limited to a percentage of window covering. We worked with that dental office to downsize their signage. That could happen here too.
- It would make sense if we were talking about just one sign, but the future signage would get cluttered. What makes sense right now doesn't necessarily make sense with what could happen in the future.
- They're amending their request to limit it to two signs above the first floor.
 - (Tucker) Yes they are. They can always ask to amend the CDR. The really big ask is allowing a sign above the second story that's not a projecting sign. Every time we meet with every single tenant, that's what we tell them. The high bar that is having something other than a projecting sign above the first floor.
- That's why the discussion of the sign type is just as important as the amount of signs and their locations, because of the context of the neighborhood.
- The main entrance is at the 1050 canopy, not at the corner of the building?
 - I believe that's correct. The end unit is a corner anchor space, I don't believe that's been leased.
- It makes more sense if we were to approve a sign that came out from the building that you could put multiple tenant signs in, to have them closer to the canopy that says "1050." Is there a reason why you chose that far right position?
 - It's probably proximity to the intersection there, the anchor corner of the building, and also pertinence to the space. I understand the entrance to the building may be a bit further down. That area made the most sense being closer to visual cues.
- Then it wouldn't compete with the canopy. I would prefer to see a sign that didn't go up past the first floor, to have the sign perpendicular to the wall and that it be something for the building with multiple tenant spaces you could just fit in. Littering the bottom part of this building with signage would be a mistake.
- We saw the design with two vertical sign areas with a projecting sign shown. Is it out of the question for a projecting sign to align with one of the columns mounted above and below the glass, on some posts with a blade in front of the glass?
 - That's not a problem from a code perspective. There is a limitation on the height of a projecting sign, not to exceed the third story, to be at a scale viewed from traffic and pedestrians.
- I see a projecting sign in that horizontal band as problematic. How we handle that in terms of what type of sign it is, where it is, we should also consider the rhythm and design of the building as well.
- Putting a couple of projecting signs right at the main entry arch, they'd be close to each other and definitely compete with that canopy. I don't know that the answer is to clutter up that entrance element with signage.
- If we were to identify a preference for the vertical projecting signs, do we need to identify a quantity?

- We would want to know the details of what the intent is, that would be number, size of projection, placement on the wall, general the location of the height. You could also give us some general discretion, then if they can't find comfort they can come back to the Commission for clarification.
- We could refer this but we'd need to provide pretty clear direction on what we want to see coming back. The applicant is willing to concede to two signable areas, that helps minimize the clutter by three signs already.
- Having two areas clarifies things a little bit, but not so much to me because we don't know what the future holds. The problem I have with the concept of projecting signs is the way they read. What validates you of being worthy of being placed on the projecting sign? If Fetch is taking the whole second floor they should get something.
- This is a framework to give staff the ability for tenants that come and go in the future.
- (Tucker) If we look at the other projects that work, we can talk about the Galaxie and the Constellation and their projecting signs, it was the same conversation: do some get preference over others? The decision was to leave it the landlord to decide who goes on those signs. That didn't put the Commission in the position of deciding who got into those spaces. We have had some of those turn over, and new signs come up within those blade signs as a change of copy. One was a tenant above the first floor and it worked just fine.
- The second floor starts to feel like advertising instead of directional signage. The dental office is a good example, I think that's an advertisement. It's like a billboard. This is a slippery slope if we say more than one blade sign because we already have the monument sign. We're just adding to the clutter of the building.
- There are a few that might have some signs at the second floor level, projecting blade signs but not wall signs, other than the Gebhardt building.

A motion was made by Knudson, seconded by Harper to grant final approval of three projecting signs. The motion failed on a vote of (3-3) with Klehr, Knudson and Harper voting yes; Bernau, Braun-Oddo and Albouras voting no; and Goodhart non-voting.

Discussion on the motion was as follows:

- We've had a nice healthy discussion here, I'd like to attempt a motion. It is unfortunate and a little bit frustrating, we all recognize that when we approve these projects and the signage isn't as fully thought out as it could be, in this instance the first proposal really is the right proposal. My motion is to grant final approval, three vertical projecting signs don't overly detract from the very nice design of this building. I think the overall mass and scale of this building would support three vertical signs if that was deemed desired. In terms of size and scale, I'm recommending we would follow the scale of projecting signs that are typical and defined by the ordinance.
- The motion denies the wall signs as they appear here, allowing up to three projecting vertical signs? I would second.
- If we are going to permit three, we should define areas where they're appropriate and areas where they are not appropriate.
- It seems like the one on the far right is appropriate, the others get more questionable.
- Even if there's an opportunity for this motion to move forward given the proposal before us, my thinking was to align it with building structure. It seems to me we don't achieve any kind of perfect symmetry, three would give plenty of space in between each vertical projection. I would be open to aligning it with the building structure and leaving it at that.
- At the level showing the yellow boxes?
- Yes.
- The vertical signs would be above the third floor line but below the third floor window sill?
- They would have to be, yes.
- Would you say if it's a maximum of three that no more than two are to the east of the main entrance and no more than one is west of the main entrance?

- A formula to skip a major vertical structure as well that creates that environment as long as there's that gap. I think it could work in multiple ways.
- If multiple tenants move in and are not happy with a limit on the vertical sign they'll start going to window signs. Is that ever under consideration? Is that something we should discuss on the UDC? I think it's worth talking about because it's a completely different look than wall or projecting signage.
 - (Tucker) There has been some discussion about the amount. A glass building would allow a lot of window signage. It was meant for 20% of your window area, but we could consider a policy discussion to treat all areas of the City uniformly.
- The motion is for three separate projecting tenant signs, or the option to have multiple tenants on each sign?
- I don't know that we have jurisdiction over the copy.
 - If you want to require uniformity in the style and design of the projecting sign that the copy goes into, that's what we did with the other two.
- My question is we say three signs, then it becomes five tenants. I feel like this could really get away from us, or you end up with a lot of window signs. Three seems kind of random.
- I do have concern that by placing these blade signs above the third floor it's setting a precedent. Others are not between the second and third floors, we should think really carefully about having blade signs sticking up that high vs. in line with the second floor windows like we're more used to seeing.

Action

On a motion by Braun-Oddo, seconded by Klehr, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (6-0).

Discussion on the motion was as follows:

- One sign that must be multi-tenant?
- Yes that would be the only way.
- I'm not as concerned with the content as we are with the amount and placement of the signage.
- I'd amend the motion to locate the sign in a vertical building element, in this particular case to the right of that first metal vertical element.
- In terms of the signage information, it could be multi-tenant or single tenant if that's the whole building. How much one tenant takes up of that would be fine but there will be a limited amount of space, I'd leave that up to the owner of the building.
- It doesn't have to be a multi-tenant sign.
- The staff report said up to two street facing signs above the first floor, but we have the discretion through CDR to limit it to one.
- Yes, and as the reviewer of signage in an Urban Design District.
- I'm wondering if there is interest in a compromise of two signs. One feels awfully limited if there ends up being a large amount of tenants. We'd be giving flexibility to the landlord that way.
- My opinion is architecturally the design really only supports it at that location at the elevation we've specified. The only other area with solid panel coming down is right above the canopy, and as we discussed earlier that might be competing with the canopy.
- Should we specify what would be the top limit of the projecting sign?
 - Not past the third floor height.
- That's consistent with what was shown in the staff report from the original design location.

The motion included the following condition:

- Approval of a single blade sign for single-tenant use or multi-tenant use that falls under the third floor, floor line to be located within the vertical building element at the far right (northeast corner).