

# ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

March 26, 2023



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 2352 South Park Street  
**Project Name:** The Black Business Hub  
**Application Type:** Comprehensive Design Review of Signage  
**Legistar File ID #** [76642](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, Urban Design Commission Secretary

The applicant is requesting a Comprehensive Design Review for signage for a new four-story multi-tenant building, located in a Commercial Corridor - Transitional (CC-T) District, as well as Urban Design District #7. This parcel is part of a large zoning lot, which includes a mixture of retail, offices, health clinic, and library, and abuts South Park Street (4 lanes, 25 mph), Hughes Place (2 lanes, 25 mph), and Ridgewood Way (2 lanes, 25 mph). While this site is located within a planned multi-use site, it will have its own CDR as it is held under separate ownership. The CDR request consists of one ground sign, wall signage, and an under canopy sign.

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(14)(d)6., Signage Criteria for Urban Design District No. 7, indicates the Urban Design Commission shall consider in each case those of the following guidelines and requirements as may be appropriate to signage:

Signage.

a. Guidelines.

- i. Preferred sign types include building mounted signs, window signs, projecting signs, and awning signs.
- ii. Signs should be simple and easy to read.
- iii. Sign colors should relate to and complement the primary colors of the building facade.
- iv. Sign design and placement should fit the character of the building and to obscure architectural details.
- v. Signage should generally be centered within the prescribed signage area of the building.
- vi. Plastic box signs are highly discouraged.
- vii. Internally illuminated signs displaying illuminated copy should be designed so that when illuminated, the sign appears to have light-colored copy on a dark or non-illuminated background.
- viii. Individually mounted backlit letters are an encouraged form of signage.
- ix. The use of small, well-designed building-mounted light fixtures is a preferred method of illuminating signage. No sign or portion of sign shall change its level of illumination more than once every one (1) hour.
- x. Freestanding signs should be attractively designed. Signs should be coordinated with adjoining properties and public street signage to avoid visual clutter.
- xi. Electronic changeable copy signs, if permitted in the District, shall comply with 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. (Cr. by ORD-09-00091, 8-1-09)

Wall Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing MGO Section 31.07, there shall be one signable area for each façade facing a street or parking lot 33 feet in width or greater. For buildings with more than one tenant, each tenant is allowed a signable area as reasonably close to its tenant space as possible. Standard net area allows for 40% of the signable area, or two square feet of signage for each lineal foot of building frontage not to exceed 100% of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 80 sq. ft. in net area. For multi-story buildings with more than one vertical occupancy, there may be up to two additional signable areas per façade displayed above the first story, with no limitation on the height of placement, but a total of only one sign per occupant, per façade.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting the ability to have a maximum of ten wall signs, each in a specific location. Three locations are proposed on the south elevation, all above the third story. Two would be for tenants, and one would be a sense of place sign. The east and north elevation would have a maximum of two wall signs above the first story, with the remaining wall signs on the first floor. As noted in the CDR Letter of Intent, while the applicant noted that each sign occupy 40% of the signable area, with a maximum of 120 sq. ft. in net area, they have indicated to staff that the net sign area will be limited to a maximum of 80 sq. ft. per sign.

Staff Comments: The sign code permits one wall sign per qualifying elevation. If the building has multiple tenants, the building owner has the option of having more than one wall sign by allowing each tenant a wall sign on a qualifying elevation as close to their tenant space as possible. The code would allow either just The Hub sign, or having multiple tenant wall signs, but not both. To ask for multiple tenant signs in addition to the sense of place sign requires CDR approval, as well as having three wall signs above the third story on the south elevation. The intent of limiting the amount of signage is to prevent sign clutter, however this building is expected to have numerous tenants and a large common area that would hold smaller or temporary vending spots for emerging businesses. The sense of place sign will assist with identification for the small or temporary tenants that would not have signage on the building or ground sign. The applicant has stated in the CDR Letter of Intent that tenants would be allowed either a wall sign or a panel on the ground sign, but not both. Tenant wall signage is determined by the owner, but would most likely be reserved for large or anchor businesses inside the building.

The elevations show identified signable areas for signs, allowing signs to occupy up to 40% of the signable area, up to 120 sq. ft., however the sign ordinance would only permit a maximum size of 80 sq. ft. As noted above, the applicant has indicated that wall signage would be limited to the maximum 80 sq. ft. allowed under the code. Staff included this correction as a condition of approval as noted below. The wall signs would have a uniform look, consisting solely of internally illuminated individual channel letters. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request, with the condition that the maximum size sign permitted for each signable area not exceed 80 sq. ft. in net area, and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review, as well as the guidelines for signage in UDD 7 have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Canopy Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing MGO Section 31.071, below-canopy signs may be suspended below an attached canopy in a position parallel to the building face, in lieu of a wall sign, and where there is no canopy fascia sign visible when facing the building. These signs are to be mounted beneath the canopy, and shall not project or extend beyond the limits of the attached canopy in any direction. The sign face shall have a maximum vertical height of two feet, shall not hang more than one foot from the lower most edge of the canopy, and must have a vertical clearance of nine feet above pedestrian areas, and 14 feet above vehicular ways.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing a sense of place sign on the façade facing South Park Street. This sign would have a total net area of 41.02 sq. ft. and hang 14' 11" from under the canopy. The sign would consist of individual channel letters with a red frame around the outer sides of the sign for supporting the letters. This is being proposed in addition to three wall signs.

Staff Comments: The proposed sign needs CDR approval as the sign face is more than two vertical feet and would be in addition to having multiple tenant wall signs. As stated earlier, the applicant is requesting both tenant signage and sense of place signage to allow large businesses to have their own signage, while still providing identification signage for small or emerging businesses. The sign is uniquely designed to appear integrated in the architecture by using the same color and shapes used on the building, and consist of internally illuminated individual channel letters, matching the look of the place sign proposed on the south elevation and creating a uniform package with rest of the tenant signage. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review, as well as the UDD 7 guidelines for signage have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Ground Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 80 sq. ft., and a maximum height of ten feet for monument-style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes. The ordinance also allows for lots with frontage 500' or more, as well as a vehicle entrance on that frontage, to have an additional monument-style ground sign, no larger than eight feet in height, with 32 sq. ft. per side, located at each vehicle entrance.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing a double-sided monument-style ground sign with an overall height of eight feet, and a total net area of 52.67 sq. ft. The ground sign copy and tenant panels will consist of routed faces with backed acrylic, and the side and top structure of the sign will have the ability to illuminate, providing accent lighting at night.

Staff Comments: The zoning lot has two existing ground signs (one for Villager Mall and one for Access Community Health Center), with an overall net area of 224.92 sq. ft. These signs are part of a separate CDR and under different ownership. The applicant is looking to have their own ground sign in order to provide identification for tenants located in the building that would not otherwise be allowed to have building wall signage. The proposed sign size and net area comply with the sign ordinance as an additional ground sign, except for the proposed location, as this parcel does not have a driveway off of South Park Street. The proposed sign will have routed faces and each tenant panel will have a black background with white font, creating a nicely designed uniform sign. The additional features of the ground sign match the building's colors and architecture, creating visual harmony on the site. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review, as well as UDD 7 guidelines for signage have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Staff Conditions/Required Plan Revisions:

- The applicant shall review the CDR Letter of Intent and graphics to show that each of the ten wall signs shall be limited to a maximum net area of 80 sq. ft.