

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

February 13, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 7050 Watts Road
Project Name: at home
Application Type: Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval
Legistar File ID # [53540](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL APPROVAL. This retail space came before the UDC earlier this year, getting final approval August 2018 to reconstruct the front façade of the building. This property is located in a Planned Development (PD) District, and sits between West Beltline Highway (4 lanes, 55 mph) and Watts Road (4 lanes, 30 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.*

Wall Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing 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 a single occupancy, stand-alone, non-residential building with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area, the maximum net area of all wall signs shall be thirty percent (30%) of the signable area. **In no case shall a wall sign exceed one hundred twenty (120) square feet in net area.** The signable area for a wall signs is determined by the area of the facade of the building that is free of doors, windows, or other major architectural detail, and **no more than four (4) vertical feet of the parapet wall may be included in the measurement of the signable area.**

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing a primary wall sign with a net area of 176 sq. ft. and extending almost 5 feet above the roofline.

Staff Comments: The proposed sign is located 10 inches higher than what would be allowed by code, as well as almost 50% larger. The front façade of the building faces the beltline, which is about 575 feet away from where the wall sign is proposed. With the beltline speed limit of 55 mph and four lanes, the proposed sign could be approved through a variance approval. However the top of the “t” and “h” extend higher than four feet above the roof line, making the complete sign just under five feet above the roof line. Yet, the proposed location of the sign fits with the overall façade and pushing the sign lower to be in compliance would create a disproportion of space on the façade. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to **two ground signs with a combined net area of 160 sq. ft.**, and a maximum height of 12’ for monument style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes (in this case, four). 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 Ground Signage: The applicant has an existing ground sign near the beltline, with a net of 260 square feet per side (520 sq. ft. total), and a height of 24.5 feet. The applicant will change out the Sam’s Club sign with the new tenant’s sign, which is allowed by the sign ordinance as a change of copy. The tenant is proposing for a second ground sign at the vehicle entrance on Watts Road. This proposed sign will have a height of 7’ 4”, with almost 70 sq. ft. of net per side.

Staff Comments: This zoning lot has an existing ground sign, approved when the site was originally built in 1989. Tenants are allowed to make changes to the sign faces, as long as the dimensions of the panels match what was originally approved. With the October 2015 code change, PD districts are now assigned equivalency districts for signage or are to obtain Comprehensive Design Review approval from the Urban Design Commission. As this existing ground sign exceeds what would be allowed by code (a maximum of 80 sq. ft. per side), the tenant cannot have second ground sign, unless it is 32 sq. ft. per side, with maximum height of 8 feet, as allowed in the code as an additional ground sign for lots with frontage 500’ or more. The applicant is instead proposing a ground sign that is about 70 sq. ft. per side, stating that the sign will provide visibility to the entrance drive for two separate and unrelated businesses. There appears to be berms that limit the view of the shopping centers from Watts Road, and as the only other ground sign is viewable from the beltline, staff support the idea of having a ground sign at the vehicle entrance to the zoning lot. However, this street is only 4 lanes and 30 mph, which does not warrant a sign with a total net of 140 sq. ft. Based on the speed limit and number of lanes, the code allows for a ground sign with a maximum size of 40 sq. ft. per side. Therefore, **Staff has no objection to the CDR request for a second ground sign exceeding the allowed net. However, staff recommends the UDC find**

the standards for CDR review have not been met for the request for a maximum net size of 140 sq. ft. Instead, staff recommends that a ground sign that has a net of 40 sq. ft. per side be approved for the CDR, as this is what the code offers as a maximum base on the number of lanes and speed limit.

Notes:

- Final submittal should include language stating all other signage not mentioned in this CDR shall comply with Chapter 31.
- Any new ground signage for the zoning lot must come before the UDC for approval.