

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: November 6, 2019	
TITLE: 441 N. Frances Street – Comprehensive Design Review for SmileDirectClub. 4 th Ald. Dist. (57742)	REFERRED:	
	REREFERRED:	
	REPORTED BACK:	
AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary	ADOPTED:	POF:
DATED: November 6, 2019	ID NUMBER:	

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Jessica Klehr, Craig Weisensel, Shane Bernau, Rafeeq Asad and Syed Abas.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of November 6, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a Comprehensive Design Review located at 441 N. Frances Street. Registered and speaking in support was Jeff Simmons. Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator summarized the request to allow signage within a tenant space that has a secondary tenant inside, similar to a bank or coffee shop inside a grocery store. This is referred as an allowed incidental use and these situations don't often occur downtown. At the time the CDR was originally prepared there were no tenants and the areas intended for signage were shown as canopy signs. The Code only allows those as wall signs, it needs to qualify as a sign on the canopy. Staff is generally supportive of the request with a couple of conditions, as well as concerns of the sign in terms of the design and quality, and the definition of it as a "raceway." The applicant did consult with the CDR documents and proceeded to manufacture the sign.

Simmons did confirm that the client has manufactured the sign but they are willing to do what the Commission requires. The sign is small enough that it doesn't jump off the building. The sign is channel letters mounted to a cabinet.

The Commission discussed the following:

- What material are the letters themselves?
 - I do not know. I think it's intended to be backlit.
- (Tucker) White acrylic face with painted vinyl.
- Are the other signs like the Kamps one above the canopy?
- (Tucker) There is a Fjällräven around the corner on State Street, it has a halo backlit stacked double letter sign and it has their logo, atop a canopy. SmileDirectClub has a long name and a small canopy. We were hoping from a design perspective, consideration for high design, a non-illuminated background would tip it over. It's not adding a lot from a design perspective. It almost needs that box for its presence.
- Does this set any precedent for internal, ancillary uses to buildings for signage?

- (Tucker) I don't think so, that's something of great concern for us. We want to make sure that legitimate occupants and tenants that are eligible for signs are getting those signs. We have looked at their tenant space, I talked with the manager and saw how they operate, it's not just a telephone on a desk that gets advertising on a building.
- You mentioned Starbuck's in a Target. They are not just a phone on a desk either.
 - They're incidental uses.
- But they don't have this kind of signage on the building.
 - They don't have canopies, they have plenty of space for walls. This is a highly articulated facade of a building but there aren't really signable areas because of all the glass. Those places are allowed up to give accessory signs, half size the height and square footage of the main sign. This is different but it's not so unusual, because of the arrangement of the building. It is worth noting that the Commission did approve a coffee shop in a retail space, they have two signs but they were one occupant, but an incidental use. The Commission was careful about that at the time it was approved. You can tell that was legitimately two distinct tenants that share space.
- (Chair) The question before us is if we do indeed agree with the interpretation of the incidental sign, do we have enough information to make a finding that the cabinet signage is of high enough quality to conform with the signage standards for this particular property?
- I'm concerned we don't have enough information. I think they should have a sign but maybe it needs a little rework.
- You're staying we have enough information but it's not high enough quality? Maybe suggestions to what they should come back with.
- The design and the size.
- (Tucker) The issue we wanted to present to you is typically with accessory signs, the rule is it can be half the height and half the size of the principal sign. But that rule doesn't fit well in this tenant space because the only thing permissible are canopy signs. It's more about the appropriateness of this as it relates to the façade. We're just presenting the facts for you to make your finding.
- I think we do have enough information. I think the sign size is appropriate but the design is super basic. There's nothing exceptional or high design about it.
- Is there any other iterations?
 - My understanding is it does have to be "SmileDirectClub." We talked internally about doing "SmileDirect" on top and "Club" below it.
- Maybe that would be more appropriate as far as the brand name and higher design. Or if it was just letters.
 - My only concern would be that in order to make that visible above the canopy would it end up being too large for you?
- I would rather have a bigger sign that looks really nice than a smaller sign that doesn't meet the aesthetics.
- I also have to say that half the time when you a sign you're recognizing a logo from a distance before you're even seeing any text.
 - What would be the most productive thing for your next meeting?
- Options are always good.
- The staff report offers a couple of options. What I'm interpreting that as is something more three dimensional.
- I'm sure you have a logo. These letters together with no space...
 - If we came back with 2 or 3 options with good images, that would probably be the best thing.
- If you have it fabricated already some photos would help me. If the annotation here is wrong and there are channel letters with depth, I would be fine with the design now. I'm not sure we're clear on what is proposed.

- We can take photos of the already fabricated sign.

ACTION:

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item to the meeting of November 20, 2019. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-0).