



Agenda Item #:	3
Project Title:	702 N Midvale Blvd & 401 N Segoe Rd - Comprehensive Design Review of Signage (CDR) Located in Urban Design District (UDD) 6. (District 11)
Legistar File ID #:	81789
Members Present:	Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Jessica Klehr, Shane Bernau, Christian Harper, Wendy von Below, Marsha Rummel, Rafeeq Asad, and Russell Knudson
Prepared By:	Kevin Firchow, AICP, Acting UDC Secretary

Summary

At its meeting of February 28, 2024, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**, with conditions, of a Comprehensive Design Review located at 702 N Midvale Boulevard and 401 N Segoe Road. Registered and speaking in support were Brian Munson, and Chris Boyce.

In presenting to the Commission, the applicant noted that this relates to an extension of the Hilldale CDR to address the recently adopted Phase 3 area, and to update existing signs to reflect the new character of the signage package, as well as extend wayfinding and character elements. In address of the two sign components raised in the staff report, directional signage G is placed in three locations, and is not intended to identify specific tenants. The applicant explained that it intended to be more character in function and add playfulness to the overall shopping center. The upper-level signage proposed for Building 500 is a continuation of discussions from the SIP stage.

Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Division Director, addressed the staff memo, noting that staff would like the Commission to discuss the street style signs, specifically related to Criteria #2 which talks about necessity relative to unique design aspects of the site. The idea is to not have sites be over-signed, there was concern some of this may be excessive. The more significant issue relates to the above-roof sign proposed on the six-story building that faces to the north. These long view signs are very sensitive. Staff talked about consistency with Standards #1 and #2 and UDD guideline #6, as well as consistency with Criteria #2 as it relates to unique design aspects. Due to its building placement, concerns were raised in meeting the standards.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Could you explain where those post whimsical signs are located and how many there are?
 - They are located in three spots: just to the right of Macy's on the midblock walkway; to the south of that at the intersection of Price Place and Heather Crest; and in the new open space.
- The above-roof sign, the UDD 6 requirement that a sign should identify the activity without imposing on the view of the district. That sounds contradictory to what a sign does, do you have anecdotal examples of other signs in that area that may or may not...seems unusual.
- (Tucker) The UDC has reviewed a lot of signs in this district. We're seeing signs that are located on buildings that contain uses that are therein more often than not, maybe not so much place signage. The thought is to reconsider as the districts are being updated, a more appropriate approach to the guidelines that is more contemporary.
- Would this be a sign about the name of the residential building or some other type of sign for a ground level use?

- We see this as more identifying the district, placed on just the north face of this building directed internally toward the project. A neighborhood identifier for the whole project.
- What would be the text of the sign?
 - It's a great question, we want to focus on just below the sign, you see the gray signage band will be full of retail signage. We wanted to make sure this identifies the building, we viewed this as identifying Hilldale as a neighborhood, as a district more so than any building name.
- Did you have a text in mind? I'm not hearing a real answer unless it's 'Hilldale.'
 - Hilldale is our current thinking.
- You talked about stuff that needs to be redone, I struggle sometimes with some old stuff stifling new, forward thinking designs and applications. But you also spoke about future wayfinding things that might be happening, that it might get crowded.
- (Tucker) We were as a staff team talking about the new approach to wayfinding through the site. There are some building directories and wayfinding signage distributed throughout the site, and street style signs that are also there, high up like a street type sign. Hilldale has often pivoted itself to be a walkable place, and we were wondering why you would have road type signs, maybe there's a higher concentration of that type of sign in this sign package. I also understand these are different as they identify areas. We always question the necessity side of things.
- The necessity part is hard, you can GPS anywhere you want to go. From a pedestrian experiential part, I think it's nice, I don't know if it's needed. Is it the height that give you guys some pause?
- (Tucker) The repetitive nature of it, do you really need it, some of the staff had some strong feelings about the necessity of this.

The Commission discussed the following:

- Overall, I think it's a nice signage package, including the Sign G. It's a playful pedestrian scale thing that I'm okay with. However, I do want to express strong opposition to the building top wall sign. I think that there's intent in the code and in the design guidelines that we really avoid this type of thing, it's an intent I strongly agree with. There's a big difference of architectural lighting and setting a skyline with illuminated windows and the architecture itself. That, in contrast to things like this, which are really more like branding, marketing, a billboard up at the top. It's visible and in this case will be very visible from some of our City's special places like Shorewood and Blackhawk Country Club. I don't think it's appropriate here or necessary.
- With building design, I struggle with that too. When you design a building, you don't want a commission to tell you where to put a sign on your masterpiece. I know the ordinance and how much the City hates looking at anything that's over 4-feet high and bright. For a place like this, the same reason we are giving for the directional signs, it's a destination. It may be okay. I think you can control some things; how bright it can be or when it's on. As a destination, which Hilldale is, which is why we have placemaking and directional signs, I can see an exception. I would like for the Commission to consider, is that concept or standard, should that be applied all the time, regardless of the project type.
- I would like the Commissioners to please consider the CDR criteria that were listed in the staff report, particularly the ones in which there are some concerns, and also the UDD 6 guidelines on imposing on views of adjacent buildings. When a motion is made, it would be good if we were consistent in our ability to recommend that a motion make a finding we are consistent with our own guidelines and CDR requirements.
- I concur with comments about the rooftop signage. I think there are possibly places where exceptions could be made for having illuminated signs up that high, but they should be exceptional and rare, and I don't think that fits that criteria. I might feel slightly different if the sign was identifying the residence or commercial establishment, but they seem to be reluctant to admit it being something like "Hilldale." I find that frankly strange, everybody knows that's the Hilldale area. Putting a lit sign on the tallest building in the area, would you find a tall building and put "downtown" on it if you were in that area? It just seems silly. That point of the City rises up anyway, you're putting a lighted sign on a topographically taller area, you'll be able to see that from a

long way and it seems inappropriate and unnecessary. I can understand why a developer or business in the area might like it but I'm thinking about the general citizenry, and I find it over the top.

- The report also mentioned a concern about the other things on the site, such as light poles, street trees, traffic directional signage. There was a concern of clutter, in my reading of the staff report there was a pretty strong objection to the above-roof sign and a concern or question about the Commission's acceptance of those three directional signs.

Action

On a motion by Bernau, seconded by von Below, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-1-1) with Bernau, von Below, Klehr, Harper, Knudson, and Rummel voting yes; Asad voting no; and Goodhart non-voting. The motion for approval did not include the above roof building sign.