

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

September 4, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 4749 Eastpark Boulevard
Project Name: The American Center
Application Type: Approval for an Alteration to an Approved Comprehensive Design Plan
Legistar File ID # [57095](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting an amendment to a previously approved Comprehensive Design Review. The Urban Design Commission approved the original Comprehensive Design Plan on February 13, 1991, for the American Center to have non-site specific graphics to identify the project and directory graphics. Nine sign locations were approved, with four of the signs planned to be installed during the American Family Insurance national headquarters construction.

It should be noted that in 1991, Comprehensive Design Plans were much different than what the code requires today. The UDC at that time could "[a]pprove a comprehensive design plan for either an existing or new building should the integration of street graphics into an overall building design be prohibited solely by the restrictions of this ordinance. The object of the comprehensive design review is to recognize exceptional effort to create visual harmony between street graphics, the building, and the building site" (Sec. 31.04(2)(b)2.b.vi of the March 15, 1989 Sign Ordinance).

The American Center consists of mostly of lots zoned Suburban Employment Center (SEC), with a group of lots on the east of The American Center zoned Commercial Center (CC), and bordered by two Principal Arterial roads: US Highway 151 (6 lanes, 55 MPH) and Interstate 39 (6 lanes, 70 mph). Eastpark Boulevard (4 lanes, 35 mph) and American Parkway (6 lanes, 35 mph) provide access the Center.

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.*

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 288 sq. ft., and a maximum height of 13' for monument style signs, based off the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes.

Proposed Ground Signage: The applicant is requesting a double sided 27' tall monument style ground sign, with a total net of 36.57 sq. ft. based on the scaling of the artwork. No other ground signs would exist on this lot.

Staff Comments: The American Center would like to update the center's identification signage, which was originally approved by UDC as mentioned earlier. The proposed signs are more modern in comparison to the existing signs and are made of high quality materials. The sign proposed for this property will face Interstate 39. This property is an outlot of The American Center, owned by American Family Insurance Corporation Real Estate, with no signage currently on the lot. The spot identified is a planned location for The American Center freeway monument, with no fixed construction time table, in the 1991 approved CDR. The proposed sign would match the other large ground sign facing Highway 151, maintaining the business park's uniform look. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Notes:

- If approved, net boxing shall be corrected so that the boxes touch. Also net and gross calculations are different than the scale shown on the plans.
- Remove Signs 3 and 4 from the site plan (0.1), as the locations were not covered under the original CDR approval and must go through their own CDR process with the existing signage on the sites.