

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: July 27, 2016

TITLE: 441 North Frances Street – Modified Comprehensive Design Review of Signage Package for “The Hub at Madison.” 4th Ald. Dist. (41502)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: July 27, 2016

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Sheri Carter, Cliff Goodhart, Richard Slayton, Tom DeChant, Dawn O’Kroley and Michael Rosenblum.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 27, 2016, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a modified Comprehensive Design Review of Signage for “The Hub at Madison” located at 441 North Frances Street. Appearing on behalf of the project were Brian Munson and Tai Maki, representing Core Spaces, LLC.

This tenant space currently serves two businesses, one of which has signage located out in front of it as part of the glass expression along State Street, the second entrance serving the interior tenant is where they are looking for some signage for better visibility. If you didn’t go inside the building, you would not know that business is located here. They both have separate entrances but they do not both have signage facing the street. They are requesting the ability to bring the sign out into a location that is conforming with what is allowed for signage, the difference being two signs.

The Secretary noted the Planning staff issues with this request: they would share the same signable area because they are not distinctly two tenant spots with demising walls between. The burden of proof of this on Comprehensive Design is usually easily demonstrated when they create a sign package that goes along with the building architecture, which they did. When we are making adjustments for a tenant need, which we just did previously, we were told not to do that again, we don’t find this is a unique circumstance to justify this, especially in light of the fact it’s in the Downtown area. Downtown Urban Design Guidelines sort of enhance that whole requirement that there be a tie between building architecture and signage. This is a decision between who gets the sign and whether or not they’re going to share a sign. Otherwise we’re going to get preferential signage for any sub-tenant. I don’t think this meets the standards for Comprehensive Design Review, and neither does Zoning. It’s a request for a sign that doesn’t meet the code.

Maki described the signage that would sit into the door at the end of the canopy. They feel that because it’s on a different façade on a different plane, and a different expression, that makes a little bit of a difference to having it look like it’s two separate retail spaces. The proposed new sign would be fully conforming to the signage package.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- If in fact the coffee shop did not exist, and these were two separate tenant spaces, would a sign be allowed at each spot?
 - Yes, but there would be two distinct demising walls between them, the coffee shop makes it one big tenant spot. In conversations about this, the decision was made when they started leasing, automatically a disconnect between what the code allows and Comprehensive Design Review, because this makes it one big space.
 - It's a unique approach to merchandising the space. But as Al said, that led to demising issues to create separation between all of those issues. Effectively both stores behind them function as different distinct stores.
 - I see this, again, as what happens when if the coffee shop wants its own sign too? Because they have a shared wall on State Street, they have a presence. They use window graphics, which is what the current solution allows.
 - I think the one main difference is that the coffee shop doesn't have an exterior door.
- Is the current "Tailgate" sign behind the glass lit?
 - Yes. It's not flushed with the glass, and that space itself is setback.
- There are a couple of other circumstances within The Hub, because of who improved the tenant spaces made adjustments to glass and openings, for instance Collectivo has those garage doors, which is not consistent with the original approval, but we do allow for those kinds of allowances to enhance visibility. But it's not unusual, Downtown for instance, to have building with some architecture to them where signs are on the inside, Collectivo on the corner of the Square, but they have glass that provides for vision.
 - The recessed component of the entryway takes it even further from the sight line. The need for visibility for retail uses on State Street is really the issue.
- We had the same issue with the last approval, with visibility and not envisioning a retail space in the space with that great of a recess around the corner. Rather than taking this piecemeal approach, maybe Jeff Zelisko (project architect) needs to look at the design of those storefronts to make sure that they have appropriate signage without having to come back every time.
 - The hard part with these is designing without knowing where the demising walls are going to go, that's really what drives a lot of the decisions.
- Does the quality of the store and its environment, and what it brings to the community inform this Commission on the possibility of a decision regarding this specific zoning issue?
 - (Chair) We assume you're high quality and that you're bringing something. Just telling us that is not likely to change any of the issues facing us. We're glad you're here, but in setting these spaces up, you chose to do the space in conjunction with the lease in a certain way, but took no cognizance of what the code is. Now you're asking us to bend the code because of choices you made, because you wanted it a certain way. You could put the doors in and you'd get a second sign, but you don't want to do that. That's fine if you don't want the doors but the code does not say you're entitled to a second sign. That's the conundrum we face; you've made some choices and you want us to change our established practices and policies.
 - (Munson) The challenge with dividing the space is more than the doors. If it was simply putting doors between the coffee shop that's one thing.
 - (Maki) That side of the decision making has already been done. Is there any other consideration instead of placing the signage up on this canopy? Mount it to the face of the glass for extra visibility?

- Is it appropriate to hang a sign from the canopy? With this location, and the speed of your customers walking by, it felt nicely visible to me. I don't think there's really full information to be able to make a decision that an exception is appropriate.

ACTION:

On a motion by Goodhart, seconded by Slayton, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (5-1) with O'Kroley voting no. The motion provided for the second sign to be placed in a recessed portion above the doorway, as suggested by the applicant. That is the immediate entrance to that tenant space. This item was approved with acknowledgement that applicable provisions of the Sign Control Ordinance, Chapter 31 MGO have been met.