

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: March 7, 2012
TITLE: 4716 Verona Road – Signage Package Amendment, Ground and Wall. 10 th Ald. Dist. (21680)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: March 7, 2012	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Marsha Rummel, Dawn O’Kroley, Todd Barnett, Richard Slayton, John Harrington, R. Richard Wagner, Melissa Huggins, and Henry Lufler, Jr.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of March 7, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of a wall sign only for a U-Haul center located at 4716 Verona Road. Appearing on behalf of the project were David Pollock and John Planert, both representing UHaul. Pollock talked about concern for visibility on the south side of the building coming from Verona Road into the City of Madison. They were focusing so much on the Verona Road improvement, they failed to look at the east side of the building where there is only one custom sign. The traffic and activity coming from the Beltline going by this facility, you don’t see the building, it’s not acknowledged. They would like to add an additional wall sign on the east side of the building, illuminated at approximately 268 square feet. Planert discussed U-Haul’s sign program and explained the company has used the same modular signs since 1964. It has become an iconic brand in America and they would like that sign erected to be seen from a distance and give customers and drivers enough reaction time to recognize the sign and exit the roadway. Verona Road would be 150-feet from the sign, which is the maximum distance where the sign can still be readable. The visibility of their building is obscured completely from the southbound direction on Verona Road. The sign proposed uses vacuum formed embossed faces with an opaque background, conforms to Madison’s night sky ordinance, and measures 300 square feet which would replace the 348 square foot structure currently on the property. The Secretary stated that the sign currently on the property is non-conforming. The height and square footage are well over what the code allows without meeting current standards. Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- The intent of this application is to provide a cleaner and easier communication for visitors to your center?
 - That’s correct.

I don’t see the wall sign as accomplishing that.

The wall sign on the east side, as you’re going south and look across right now, you see Home Depot, the gas station and you’re able to see the side of our building because of the canopies. What you don’t see is anything indicating it’s a U-Haul building. You begin to pick it up at about 200-feet when you come off Verona Road, and you can see it through the trees but the wall looks blank.

- Staff noted that the wall sign would be permitted and would basically be the primary sign on that façade. The existing sign that’s there would be considered accessory. Relative to use of the existing non-

conforming ground sign, we told them they could attempt to use it in its current configuration but that apparently won't work.

- When reusing what is there, we'd invest the money to redesign a whole new sign. We're going to be challenged in the future when Verona Road goes up 12-feet. Right now the sign sits 12-feet above the freeway at a certain distance.

You have to think about, if this was not a PUD, you'd have to do Comprehensive Design, which would require you to demonstrate that there is a tie between all signage both permitted and accepted between site design and building architecture, which is a very high standard to demonstrate. PUD is an exception to begin with.

- We photoshopped our sign in (ground sign as proposed), that's the existing Cub Foods sign structure at the top of our sign. This was to demonstrate that when you're going north on Verona Road you would need it to be that high to get over the 16-foot grade elevation change and 3-foot elevation change in the grade, so you're already starting at 19-feet where you have to look down.
- In the age of GIS do people really pay attention to signs or just get their directions to turn left now. You're asking us to make an exception for something that in the future is not going to meet your needs when Verona Road is approved. When Verona Road is improved I'm sure all of the retail owners are going to be meeting with the DOT to figure out their signage issues. Home Depot would no longer be visible either, all the retailers in this area will need to address this.
 - We were going to design the sign so that we could leave the poles in that would support a taller sign.

I can't imagine that this Commission is going to approve everyone coming forward and asking for really tall signs.

The DOT has been very adamant that the sign issue is not their problem. We asked them to support us and initially they came to the first meetings, but when we approached them about helping with the sign they said "sorry."

So how do people get onto those exit signs?

I believe that's something through DOT. But even so you are still looking for the company's brand.

- The only reason you're saying we should grant the variance is because people are driving your trucks. That's the sense I get. I think there has to be really profound basis for the sign height to have to exceed code. If you're asking for a new sign on the east wall, it seems that the issue of another taller sign isn't as key.
 - The east sign that we're adding is only visible from a very short distance.
- Staff noted that when we rewrote the code, we were trying to get rid of tall big signs. Even if we gave you the maximum amount, which means you'd be on the Beltline it would be 144 square feet per face and 22 feet tall.
- The sign that you're proposing is so far down that if you're not familiar with it you're going to think your exit is elsewhere. Maybe you need better identification for entry.
- You could move your wall sign by the self-storage.

ACTION:

On a motion by Harrington, seconded by Huggins, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of the wall sign only. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0).

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 4, 4, 5 and 5.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 4716 Verona Road

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
	4	4	1	-	4	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5

General Comments:

- Too high (+10').