



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 325, 327, 329, 331 E Wilson Street
Application Type: Signage Exception
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID #: [77009](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Dan Pietrzykowski, Grant Signs | Jenny Koester, North Central Group | Rubin 317 East Wilson, LLC | Rubin 323 East Wilson, LLC

Project Description: The applicant is proposing the installation of a wall sign on a wall that is not directly adjacent to parking lot or street, on the east elevation of the existing building.

Approval Standards: The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The Sign Control Ordinance, [MGO Sec. 31.043\(3\)\(d\)](#) states that: *“After a public hearing as provided in Sec. 33.24(4)(e)3(d), the Urban Design Commission (UDC) may permit the use of wall signs on building façades not adjacent to off-street parking areas where, due to a variation of building setbacks, a signable area exists, provided the area of the sign shall not exceed the area of the wall sign permitted on the front of the building.”*

Summary of Design Considerations

Project Site Location. The project site is located in Madison’s downtown on E Wilson Street, a building formerly known as “Rubin’s” for which recent development approvals allow for the conversion of the former retail establishment to an extended-stay hotel use. While the primary street façade is E Wilson Street, the site does also have visibility from John Nolen Drive.

Existing Signage. As a new development, there is currently no signage associated with the new use on the building. However, the former retailer did have two canopy signs on E Wilson Street and wall signs on the south, east and west elevations.

Summary of Sign Code Requirements and Proposed Signage. Since the south façade is not adjacent to an off-street parking area associated with the development, signage is not allowed on this elevation. As noted above, the UDC may grant an exception to this requirement provided that the signage shall not exceed the area of wall signage permitted on the front of the building. In this case, the code allows for a 79.6 square-foot wall sign on the E Wilson Street-facing elevation. In addition, the proposed sign is also not allowed to be larger than 30 percent of the identifiable signable area on the non-qualifying façade. In this case, the signable area on the non-qualifying, south façade is 22.09 square feet. At 21.49 square feet, the proposed sign is smaller than what the code would allow.

The proposed wall sign is comprised of black acrylic raceway-mounted, halo-lit, individual channel letters with white aluminum backer panels.

Summary of Staff Analysis. Staff requests the UDC gives consideration to this request, especially related to the precedential nature with regard to signage being located above the first floor. Staff notes that a signage exception is required because the proposed sign is located on a non-qualifying elevation, not facing a street or parking area associated with the building.

While the UDC has approved some signs at the second floor level in the Downtown area, including on other walls of the subject building and adjacent property, locating wall signage above the first floor has always been given careful consideration. On-balance, staff believes that it may be possible for this sign, which is believed to be of a high-quality design, to be approved at the second level. Staff further notes that in the alternative, a larger sign could be located just above the first floor windows, within a larger signable area that would allow for a larger sign. Staff requests the Commission makes findings related to the appropriateness of signage on this wall and height.

Staff notes the following considerations:

- The proposed wall sign is smaller than what the code would allow on the street-facing elevation.
- The proposed sign is of high quality design aesthetic and the proposed illumination is limited and subtle,
- The proposed sign provides visibility and location information from John Nolen Drive, the secondary route for accessing the site.