

AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: October 29, 2008
TITLE: 4202 East Towne Boulevard – Add Electronic Message Board to a Ground Sign in Urban Design District No. 5. 17 th Ald. Dist. (12217)	REFERRED: REREFERRED: REPORTED BACK:
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED: POF:
DATED: October 29, 2008	ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Lou Host-Jablonski, Chair; Ron Luskin, Jay Ferm, Marsha Rummel, Bruce Woods, John Harrington, Richard Slayton, Todd Barnett and Dawn Weber.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of October 30, 2008, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a ground sign in Urban Design District No. 5 located at 4202 East Towne Boulevard. Appearing on behalf of the project was Matt Fortney, representing BPP Wisconsin, LLC. Prior to the presentation staff noted the property's inclusion within Urban Design District No. 5. Staff reminded the Commission of a policy established as part of the Commission's review of the draft revised sign ordinance which required that all considerations for the approval of electronic reader board signage be forwarded to the Commission for formal review and approval on any project under its jurisdiction. Staff noted the property's location within Urban Design District No. 5 where the electronic reader board is proposed to be utilized in association with the operation of the hotel. Fortney then provided a detailed review of the addition of changeable electronic reader board sign panel to the existing ground sign on the site. Fortney noted that the double sided panel measures 7'8" in width by 4'1" tall, adding 31.3 square feet of gross area to the existing graphic, which is 40.2 square feet in size, for a total gross area of 71.5 square feet of copy for the ground sign. It is intended to utilize the electronic display to detail the current rental rate and promote property amenities such as high speed internet. Fortney further qualified that the sign's location within Urban Design District No. 5 would require it not to change copy any more frequently than once per hour. He further noted that the 71.5 total square footage of the sign would be allowed under the provisions of the Street Graphics Ordinance, which provides for a maximum 72 square feet. Following the presentation the Commission noted the following:

- The purpose of signage is to provide for the identification of the business, where the electronic reader board advertises products beyond identification purposes.
- There is a need to address the higher standards of the Urban Design District, which places an emphasis on street graphics for identification purposes.
- The addition of electronic reader board may be acceptable if better integrated and scaled down in contrast to the text portions of the sign with emphasis for identification consistent with the Urban Design District requirements.
- Favorable consideration of the proposal could be provided if the extra two tacked-on signs are removed.
- The proposal's location within an Urban Design District provides leeway to be as restrictive as possible with a higher standard required within the district.

A motion was then made by Woods, seconded by Ferm, to reject the proposal due to lack of consistency with the standards required within an Urban Design District was made, followed by continued discussion as follows.

- The hotel is at a competitive disadvantage with other hotels, signage that features electronic changeable copy within the area.
- The proposal may be acceptable with a limitation of two lines of text, better integration with the overall ground sign, along with removal of extra signs.
- The diminished size of the current display panel should be 1/3 to 1/2 the size as proposed.

A substitute motion by Slayton, seconded by Barnett citing the above conditions was made in favor of initial approval and amended to provide that the reader board sign be framed with a blue frame and to be more integrated. Discussion on the substitute motion centered around the questioned consistency of allowing the additional signage in light of existing electronic changeable copy graphic use by neighboring businesses, as well as recent approvals by the Commission approving or not authorizing the use of electronic reader boards. The vote to provide that the substitute motion be the main motion failed on a vote of (4-5) with Rummel, Slayton, Barnett and Luskin voting in favor; with Host-Jablonski, Woods, Ferm, Harrington and Weber voting no. Continued discussion on the original motion for rejection was as follows:

- Support more of what the failed motion provided.
- Important to look at existing context along with a more appropriately sized reader board smaller in scale.
- Comparison with the Motel 6 ground sign, which features electronic board provide that the current proposal is a more elegant presentation.
- When traveling without reservations important to know price.
- Its use in context to the neighborhood, it could be accommodated with just one line of text.
- Not a proponent of the ability to approve, but may make design of them the best signage that is aesthetically pleasing.
- Should purge these signs as bad design.
- Should think about size versus area due to technology.
- The display of the price of a room is part of the business and is not advertising products.
- Limit its use to pricing only.

An alternative substitute motion for referral was made by Rummel, seconded by Luskin requiring a reduction in size by 1/3 of the electronic changeable copy portion, its integration with better design, along with removal of the two add on signs was withdrawn following continued discussion as follows.

- The historic perspective is to now allow except in certain circumstances.
- The Commission questioned the applicant's willingness to limit content of messages.

Fortney noted the client's willingness to maybe consider.

Another substitute motion for referral was made by Barnett, seconded by Rummel with the following:

- Look at applicant's willingness to limit content of messages as a follow-up to Fortney's suggestion that it could be considered.
- Fortney is to come back with directions from client relative to the type of message, to be smaller in scale, better integrated with existing sign with removal of the two add-on signs. The vote to make the substitute motion the main motion passed on a vote of (6-3) with Barnett, Luskin, Rummel, Weber,

Slayton and Ferm voting in favor; with Harrington, Woods, and Host-Jablonski voting no. The vote on the motion passed on a vote of (6-3).

ACTION:

On a substitute motion by Barnett, seconded by Rummel, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (6-3) with Harrington, Woods and Host-Jablonski voting no.

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 3, 4, 4, 4 and 5.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 4202 East Towne Boulevard

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	4
	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	5
	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3

General Comments:

- Smaller would be acceptable, better integrated.
- If you want changeable copy sign, architecture needs to step up in design value.
- Electronic reader boards should be banned because they are used for other than business ID.
- Sign as presented needs better integration of reader board, if this is approved. However, I do not support reader boards in Urban Design Districts.