

AGENDA # 3

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: December 11, 2019	
TITLE: 1802 Wright Street – Amendment to an Existing Comprehensive Design Review. 12 th Ald. Dist. (58347)	REFERRED:	
	REREFERRED:	
	REPORTED BACK:	
AUTHOR: Janine Glaeser, Secretary	ADOPTED:	POF:
DATED: December 11, 2019	ID NUMBER:	

Members present were: Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Lois Braun-Oddo, Christian Harper, Jessica Klehr, Tom DeChant, Craig Weisensel, Rafeeq Asad, Syed Abbas and Shane Bernau.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of December 11, 2019, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** consideration of an amendment to a Comprehensive Design Review located at 1802 Wright Street. Registered and speaking in support were Kerry McAllen, Dan Pietrzykowski and Allison Novitske, both representing Grant Signs.

Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator gave a summary of staff's observations and concerns. The original CDR was approved in 2000, they were very different back then. Staff doesn't really understand what the reason is for the CDR, possibly to allow for two ground signs, but the record is poor and unclear. It appears to have fallen through the cracks, the sign permits were approved in good faith with the City, in conflict with the CDR. The remaining issue the UDC should review and consider, beyond any other concerns they may have, relates to the size allowance for proposed wall signs for multiple tenants. The façade has a variety of demising columns that create a variety of different sizes of potential signable areas. Staff has concerns about a blanket approach or signage that is excessive in size given they're in a kind of alley when you pull into the site. Our recommendation is 32 square feet.

Pietrzykowski stated that they turned in a sign permit for an existing tenant that changed names and has an existing sign. It came up that this CDR was there. These are large buildings, and while they understand the negotiation that happens here, from the wall sign perspective the larger signs just make sense. He shared perspectives of what the sign would look like at different sizes. To stay within the spirit of a CDR and in the spirit of being very large buildings, taking the limit down to 25% would be reasonable. There are ground signs but to that point, they're still relatively small tenant displays on those signs, 8 1/2" in height and 4 1/2" in width for identification.

The Commission discussed the following:

- What is the purpose of the wall sign?

- Identification, visitors, customers and deliveries. Many times people are not familiar with the site, the distance of the signable areas from the building could be a relatively far distance. Especially driving on the access drive-thru there, there's still a couple hundred feet where the viewing distance to that sign is going to be.
- Based on what is allowed the difference of what you're requesting and what's allowed, I don't think it's going to make that much different. If it's just to identify a door, it doesn't need to be huge. If everyone puts up oversized signs, it detracts from the architecture. It creates a precedence.

Kerry McAllen stated the purpose of the signage is for wayfinding. Sometimes it's dark and these signs aren't lit, the smaller they are the harder they are to see. We'd like the tenants to have the opportunity for a larger sign should they want one. It can make the difference in us being successful in leasing the spaces. It is important to the tenant.

Tucker clarified that this CDR would also allow each tenant to have a projecting sign, often referred to as a blade sign. They have a bit more physicality and viewability. The code has a limitation when you have ground signs and projecting signs that limits the maximum size at 12 square feet. Staff is recommending an exception to allow the projecting signs where right now you would have to have a street facing wall.

- The size of the sign isn't as relative to me as the way it's placed on the building. It kind of appears to be every which way but loose. You've got low, medium, high and up by the parapet which is outside of the signable area. I wonder if you could standardize how they are placed for the aesthetics. It's good to have consistency.
- I concur with Rafeeq, especially the buildings that face each other. You've gone by the ground signs to get you in the right place, once you're in there the different in these sizes is not a make or break kind of deal. Matt has just indicated that blade signs are also part of this. My take on these signage issues, I'm sure it's a concern of our zoning and inspection people, when we make these exceptions everyone else out there wants the same thing, it's setting precedence. You showed three potential square foot areas of 40, 60 and 80, the City prefers something around 32. The lesser of the ones you show to me seems more than adequate given the existing ground signs and the option to use a blade sign too. I lean toward the lesser.
- Chris said pretty much everything I was going to say.
- The size of the sign, you're right about setting precedence but this is an area that's pretty spread out and you're typically in a car. It's a car-oriented thing and I feel like it's pretty sprawling. I would question why not a bigger sign, it gives it more of a sense of place in an area that's pretty bland as it is.
- I agree with Jessica, I think just more consistency would offset some of the concerns.
- Regarding consistency...
 - (Tucker) There are many signable areas, they talk about the randomness of signs being located, we recognize what you said but it has to be a condition for a signable area. Naturally it's placed closer to the entrance and lower. If you would like to make some further requirements on design, there isn't a lot of it. We want them to have the logo-ability, most tenants are going to have a logo. If you think there are other components that should be included, this is where you would do that. Or it could be referred to come back with something more known.
- Where you see 1808 Wright Street, every business gets a sign, if the sign square footage is allowed to increase, they still get a blade sign?
 - This request is for every tenant, every tenant can have a blade sign.
- This would happen in every bay?
 - Potentially, depending on how the building is demised out. Every tenant space would be eligible for a 32 square foot sign and a 12 square foot projecting sign. They probably won't all opt for that. You can create a rule where they go on the façade.

- A motion might include definition of signable areas. There's a lot of EIFS bands, we can discuss if those are considered architectural elements to cross or not cross. We want to be sure that the maximum signage area isn't so big it would cross an architectural element.
 - They would need an exception to do that. Signable areas are broken by changes in colored EIFS < not joint lines.
- (McAllen) I'd like to indicate that the size of the sign we desire is larger and the secondary desire is the blade sign. The blade sign that exists now I assume is grandfathered. In your decision making, our original application was a request for 60 square feet, which is a reduction of the 80 square feet which is the current code.
- (Pietrzykowski) Standard code would allow 80 square feet, 40% of the defined signable area. But in no case can a sign be larger than 80 square feet. We're proposing limiting that to 60 square feet, if we said no blade signs but still OK with 60 square feet in recognition of the ground signs approved 19 years ago.
- 98% of the time a tenant wants a larger sign over a blade sign.
 - (Tucker) They could get rid of the two ground signs, make it compliant and they don't need the CDR.
- If we did that what about the existing ground signs?
 - They would need to be modified to comply with the ordinance, the square footage limitation is smaller.
- I believe the total of the four is 80 square feet, it's in a 40/80 zone, today the total before sign faces is 200 square feet, that's a 40/80 area.
 - The sign code has a rule allowing the maximum amount of ground signage is two signs and any individual face cannot exceed 40 square feet, combined 80 square feet. Then they come to the UDC for more than two ground signs and more square footage.
- The sign shown on this page, are these all under the 32 square feet?
 - We don't have information on a lot of those. We're unsure about the unusually shaped ones. We didn't have that information so we couldn't explain definitively. There are some signs here that are illegal, but we'll deal with compliance as a separate matter. They happen to be the existing conditions.

A motion as made by Asad to define the signable area as not crossing the colors, and to have signs fit within the stated allowable areas, up to 80 square feet, excluding higher areas, keeping the signs from being on the top and larger than they need to be.

Discussion continued:

- I take that as you're agreeable to the signable area as defined in orange.
- I'm trying to dictate the size and location of the signs. It should not be above the band color.
- As far as height it's within that first band above the windows rather than the second band.
- The first EIFS band above the windows.
- Centered? Vertically?
- I would say centered within that signable area.
- Did you also recommend a maximum sign size?
- I agree with the allowable signable area, the percent at 80 square feet. Per the ordinance.
- You're decreasing the height of the signable area to 5'9" and a maximum area up to 80 square feet? OK.
- Whatever the City says is what they can have, they don't go bigger than that.

A motion was made by Braun-Oddo for approval of Chapter 31 allowable sign size within the first EIFS joint above the windows at up to 80 square feet.

Discussion continued:

- In the staff report it said that in keeping with the spirit of 32 square feet would be less than the three options they showed. Sell me the 32 square feet, it is so at odds with the 80 allowed under Chapter 31.
 - (Tucker) It's a struggle with the lack of detail provided. Our thought first was setting a size that is independent of the width of the tenant space. Then we looked to a conventional size we typically see for signage along a street with very slow moving traffic where the building is in close proximity to the vehicles looking for those tenant spaces. We're looking through the CDR lens that talk about necessity and struggling with large signs being approvable where you have a captive audience, only going to your tenant space. There does not need to be large signage here. That's why we thought utilizing a 32 square foot size, which is conventional in the code, is appropriate and reasonable.
- So 32 is the standard, you are asking for 80?
 - (Pietrzykowski) Code allows for 80. Hypothetical is the ground signs go away. Then there would be no need to talk about a CDR. Then every tenant would be allowed up to 80 square foot signs. There's oversized ground signs approved in 2000, they are larger than code, but we also want to give an appropriate scale sign for those tenants, which if those ground signs didn't exist would be 80 square feet, but we're requesting 60 which is 25% reduction of what standard Chapter 31 would allow if those ground signs weren't there.
- But since they are there, you're requesting to keep the oversized ground signs, have an oversized wall sign and blade signs? That's a bit much.
 - (Pietrzykowski) I don't think it's oversized, it's 25% less, which is what I tried to demonstrate. There are 8 tenant spaces displayed on each of those ground sign faces. We don't have a copy in the packet but the ground signs there today have these slats for the tenants and each of those are 9 inches tall. Setback I'm guessing about 100-feet from the street, so that's the signage each of those business has for identification. We're not asking to go over what's standard for wall signs. Making no changes to the ground signs.

Klehr seconded the motion moved by Braun-Oddo.

Further discussion:

- This illustration shows the largest signable area, but there is a potential for two smaller signable areas with two larger signs next to each other?
- We have not been given enough information to evaluate all the signable areas. There could be a request to come back with additional information.

The motion failed on a vote of (4-4). The Chair exercised the right not to vote on the motion.

Asad moved to limit the sign areas to the first reveal section at the standard of 32 square feet because they have ground signs and blade sign options, consistent with the staff report specifications. The motion was seconded by Weisensel.

Abbas indicated he was going to propose a different motion to ask them to come back with additional information so the Commission can make a more informed decision. There's quite a bit of confusion here, we don't want to make decisions that hurt your business or the other way around.

According to the Zoning Administrator the referral can take precedence.

- (Chair) We can amend the motion. If the primary mover is not opposed. I'm not that well versed in Roberts Rules but I don't think it's such that a motion can be completely reversed versus the original motion.
- (Ald. Abbas) Under Roberts Rules the other motion is standing, I'm proposing an alternative motion so the first vote should be on my motion and if that is approved or denied, then we come back to your motion for approval or denial. On your motion I can't under Roberts Rules propose another motion but we cannot propose a third motion, my motion has to be first discussed. Alternative motion is I'm asking them to bring more pictures, not just one example, all the property signage so we can make a better informed decision.
- I don't think that's how Roberts Rules work. You deal with the amendment but you don't just ignore a motion that's been seconded already.
- It's a motion for referral to come back with better information.
- (Chair) Under advisement from our Alder member, an alternative motion for referral is being requested.

The motion failed on a vote of (3-5).

Back to Asad's original motion, basically approval per staff recommendations.

The motion failed on a vote of (4-4).

- Given the idea to reject the CDR which would mean getting rid of the ground signs, is that something you would be in favor of?
 - (McAllen) They're awful expensive, I'd have to go back to my tenants and ask them what's more important, the ground signs or to go to the Chapter 31 rules. We've been operating under the false understanding that our tenants have been applying for sign permits and getting them for 19 years, now we're discovering that that was a mistake and trying to correct that. Over the years we've done our best to invest in the property and make it look nice. That's what we hope to do moving forward.
- (Chair) We've had a number of motions fail. We have all the information we need to either refer or pass something. I will not vote on the tie motion so that motion also fails.

A motion was made by Abbas, seconded by DeChant to refer the project. The motion failed on a vote of (2-6).

- If referral's not likely, motions are not passing, where are we now?
- (Chair) We are charged with providing a recommendation. I have not been in this position before, I suppose there are other options for tabling it.
- (Tucker) I think you're right on much of that. There was a question asked earlier "how big are these signs?" I think the attempt to refer was to get dimensions on these which is probably what we need to make a good decision. None of these are nearly 80 square feet, they're probably in the range of 32 square feet. The proposed sign that kicked this off is 27 square feet.
- If I had known that, and we agreed to just put them on the lower band, we'd be OK.

Abbas moved to adopt the staff recommendation along with the first EIFS band and centered horizontally.

- (Pietrzykowski) I completely understand, it sounds like there was a condition added to what staff said to also prescribe the location of the signs. What if a sign is 12" tall but it's 30 feet long? Because it's all capital letters in that band, if you center it it's going to be lower than others and not in the most effective

identification area. This company here is changing their name and want a new sign in the place of the existing sign, which is aesthetically well-placed. By adding specific location within the sign band you'll see signs placed in a patchwork pattern.

- In a vertical the center of that sign would be the same the center of the sign is going to be the center of the band.

ACTION:

On a motion by Abbas, seconded by Asad, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** to adopt the staff recommendations for signage within the first EIFS band and centered vertically. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-1) with Klehr voting no.