

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

PRESENTED: June 7, 2017

TITLE: 3950 Commercial Avenue – Street
Graphics Variance. 15th Ald. Dist. (47254)

REFERRED:

REREFERRED:

REPORTED BACK:

AUTHOR: Chris Wells, Acting Secretary

ADOPTED:

POF:

DATED: June 7, 2017

ID NUMBER:

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Chair; Dawn O’Kroley, Rafeeq Asad, Lois Braun-Oddo, Michael Rosenblum, Cliff Goodhart and John Harrington.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of June 7, 2017, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a Street Graphics Variance located at 3950 Commercial Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Kerry McAllen, Kristen Eastman and Allison Novitske, representing Grant Signs. The applicant seeks a variance for an increase in square footage by 50% to allow for 216 overall square feet with a height of 27.6 feet for a pylon sign. The current sign is roughly 200 square feet. Due to the property’s location, the setback, six lanes of traffic and 45 MPH speed limit they feel the increase in size is warranted. This property is unique because it houses two buildings that contain multiple tenants.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- Usually pylon signs are single occupancies.
- When I look at the new sign, “McAllen Center” is very small. It seems like it would be hard to read any one of these because there’s so much going on, even though it’s larger. I can understand why you need a large sign when you have all of these words and logos, but it feels like it could be presented differently to be more clear at the smaller approved scale.
- Once we set this precedent, we’re opening a door for lots of other places to say “we have multiple tenants and we need to have signage for all our tenants.”
- I’m not convinced this is needed.
- The variance is for the size of the sign? We’re not able to restrict the number of tenants. They can do the one on the right, are we really opening a door or are we...
- If you’re bringing a variance for that reason, you’re opening a door.
- The size of the sign itself, regardless of number of tenants, provides that you have graphics in a field. A lot of this sign is field; is it really efficient to provide that much square footage and a ground field, or is it better to have more well-designed sign that deals with identification issues.
- How are we getting away with the lighter base?

- We verified that with Chrissy, it's two poles, 1/3 considered a pylon sign.
- There's a lot of field dedicated as a premise to support the sign versus providing for direct identification in a well-designed manner, and the lack of integration with McAllen in that whole formula.
- Maybe it could be consistent font without all the different logos, identifying each tenant with just a standard font so it's not so busy. You've got very distinctly different logos, fonts and colors.
- Knowing where the destination is doesn't always help with wayfinding. It comes back to the McAllen Center; when you go to a lot of the multi-tenant buildings they'll have the name of the building and then the logos and everything smaller, as something you can quickly scan. If you know something is in the McAllen Center you'll scan and look for your destination. I think you could accomplish that without the variance if there was simplification of the smaller sign.
- I would advise that once the report for this item is complete, the applicant should meet with myself and with Zoning. I still have an issue with the width of the base and whether this is a monument sign or not.

ACTION:

On a motion by Harrington, seconded by Braun-Oddo, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0).