



ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

January 15, 2020

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 702 Pflaum Road
Project Name: La Follette High School Campus
Application Type: Approval for an Alteration to an Approved Comprehensive Design Plan
Legistar File ID # [58719](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting an amendment to a previously approved Comprehensive Design Review. The Urban Design Commission approved the original Comprehensive Design Plan on September 18, 2002, for the Lussier Stadium Ground sign, as a wayfinding sign. The subject property is located in the Campus Institutional (CI) District and the high school shares the lot with Sennett Middle School and Lussier Athletic Stadium. This lot has a total of four existing ground signs with primary street frontage being Pflaum Road (4 lanes, 40 mph), and has two small walkway access paths from Spaanem Ave (2 lanes, 25 mph).

Pursuant to Section 31.043(4)(b), MGO, the UDC shall apply the following criteria upon review of an application for a Comprehensive Sign Plan:

1. *The Sign Plan shall create visual harmony between the signs, building(s), and building site through unique and exceptional use of materials, design, color, any lighting, and other design elements; and shall result in signs of appropriate scale and character to the uses and building(s) on the zoning lot as well as adjacent buildings, structures and uses.*
2. *Each element of the Sign Plan shall be found to be necessary due to unique or unusual design aspects in the architecture or limitations in the building site or surrounding environment; except that when a request for an Additional Sign Code Approval under Sec. 31.043(3) is included in the Comprehensive Design Review, the sign(s) eligible for approval under Sec. 31.043(3) shall meet the applicable criteria of Sec. 31.043(3), except that sign approvals that come to Comprehensive Design Review from MXC and EC districts pursuant to 31.13(3) and (7) need not meet the criteria of this paragraph.*
3. *The Sign Plan shall not violate any of the stated purposes described in Sec. 31.02(1) and 33.24(2).*
4. *All signs must meet minimum construction requirements under Sec. 31.04(5).*
5. *The Sign Plan shall not approve Advertising beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.11 or Off-Premise Directional Signs beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.115.*
6. *The Sign Plan shall not be approved if any element of the plan:*
 - a. *presents a hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic on public or private property,*
 - b. *obstructs views at points of ingress and egress of adjoining properties,*
 - c. *obstructs or impedes the visibility of existing lawful signs on adjacent property, or*
 - d. *negatively impacts the visual quality of public or private open space.*
7. *The Sign Plan may only encompass signs on private property of the zoning lot or building site in question, and shall not approve any signs in the right of way or on public property.*

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: Summarizing 31.14(1)(e), one wall and one ground signs per street frontage may be displayed identifying the entity, with a **maximum of two ground signs and two wall signs per zoning lot**. Signs, whether displayed on a wall or the ground, shall not exceed 12 sq. ft. in net area, nor be closer than ten feet to any lot line, except such signs may be increased in net area by one square foot for each additional foot that the sign is set back more than 12 feet from the street lot line. **No sign under this section shall exceed 32 square feet in net area.** No sign shall project higher than one story, or 12 feet above the curb level, whichever is lower.

Proposed Ground Signage: The applicant is proposing to update three existing ground signs. The applicant would keep the same location and brick base for each, but update the signage with a new look.

The existing double sided Lussier Stadium sign has an existing net area of roughly 13 sq. ft., while the new proposed aluminum panel to be installed over the brick base would have a total net area of 15.95 sq. ft. This sign would remain set back 5' 9" from the property line and would be non-illuminated.

The Robert M. La Follette High School ground sign has an existing net area of roughly 49 sq. ft., while the new ground sign would have metal panel installed over the brick with a total net area of 109.67 sq. ft. This sign would remain 45' away from the property line and would be non-illuminated.

The applicant did not provide dimensions for the existing changeable copy sign to confirm the new sign will have the same net area as the existing, but the new sign would be upgraded to an electronic changeable copy sign and have a total net area of 46.44 sq. ft. This sign would remain 51' away from the property line, and would be internally illuminated.

The applicant also proposes to relocate the existing Jefferson Middle School ground sign closer to the parking lot entrance of the school, and would be located 10' away from the property line. This sign is also non-illuminated.

Staff Comments: This lot is unique in that both the high school and the middle school share the lot, with both schools having the main access point off of Pflaum Road. The Lussier ground sign, which was originally approved through Comprehensive Design Review, does not comply with current ordinance requirements, as it is too close to the property line and will have a total net area over 12 sq. ft. The other two ground signs to be replaced comply with the ordinance as to their placement, but are both over the maximum net area allowed (32 sq. ft.). Since the applicant plans to reuse the base off each ground sign, it is not feasible to require them to relocate the signs in order to have them be in a compliant location, or potentially reduce the net of the signs by having them closer to the street.

These existing brick bases appear to match the brick on the school façade, and the stadium ground sign and high school sign materials will be of a higher quality material (aluminum) and design, compared to what is currently installed. As for the replacement of the manual changeable copy sign with an electronic changeable copy, the UDC is authorized to approve this as stated in Sec. 31.043(3)(i) under additional sign code approvals; However, due to the number of ground signs already existing on the site, this is part of the CDR request. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Wall Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: Summarizing 31.14(1)(e), **one wall and one ground signs per street frontage may be displayed** identifying the entity, with a maximum of two ground signs and two wall signs per zoning lot. Signs, whether displayed on a wall or the ground, shall not exceed 12 sq. ft. in net area, nor be closer than ten feet to any lot line, except such signs may be increased in net area by one square foot for each additional foot that the sign is set back more than 12 feet from the street lot line. No sign under this section

shall exceed 32 square feet in net area. No sign shall project higher than one story, or 12 feet above the curb level, whichever is lower.

Proposed Wall Signage: The applicant is proposing to replace two existing wall signs that face the high school parking lot (east) with two new signs. Dimensions of these signs were not provided, is staff cannot confirm they will be of the same size as the existing signs. Each sign will have a net area of 48 sq. ft., and would be located higher than 12' above the curb level due to the design of the building facade.

The applicant also wishes to reserve in the CDR the option for the Middle School to have a wall sign that would also face the parking lot. The applicant has stated the sign will be no more than 32 sq. ft. in size, but would probably also be higher than 12' above the curb level.

Staff Comments: As the applicant is requesting for more than one wall sign, with both signs are over 32 sq. ft. and face the parking lot instead of the street, a CDR is required. The school has two existing wall signs that identify the entrances of the building. One doorway is for the main entrance for the high school, which leads to the high school offices, and the other the doorway (activities entrance) leads to the gymnasium, auditorium, etc. These signs are primarily needed to guide visitors unfamiliar with the school layout to their destination. The signs will also be made of aluminum and are similarly designed to match the high school ground signage. These signs will be non-illuminated. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Notes:

- Provide more detailed dimensions of the existing La Follette ground signs.
- Check dimensions listed for the net on the Lussier Ground sign and Robert M. La Follette High School, for accuracy.
- Night view for the electronic changeable copy sign will be required for the final sign off, as there is concern regarding the "L" being darker than the background.
- Letter of intent shall be updated to say the Jefferson Middle School wall sign will be allowed a maximum net area of 32 sq. ft.
- The final CDR submittal should note the placard on the base of the change of copy sign will be removed.