

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

October 2, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 770 Regent Street
Project Name: Hilton Gardens
Application Type: Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval
Legistar File ID # [57443](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL APPROVAL. UDC originally approved the plans for the proposed hotel July 31st, 2019, as the property is part of a Planned Development (PD) district. The new hotel will be built behind an existing office building situated near the street. The property abuts Campus Mall, although the portion it abuts is a pedestrian walkway, and a bike path to the North. This property is part of a larger zoning lot, which has driveways connecting to Regent Street, (four lanes and 25 mph) and West Washington Avenue (four lanes and 25 mph). This zoning lot has an existing CDR which UDC approved November 16, 2016 for the wall and ground signage found on 780, 740, and 700 Regent Street and 660 West Washington Avenue; however the ownership for the hotel is different from the existing CDR ownership.

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.*

Projecting Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Occupants may display a total of one (1) projecting sign on a facade facing a street. This zoning lot is allowed a projecting sign 20 sq. ft. per side based on the number of traffic lanes. Also, if a ground and projecting signs are displayed on the same a zoning lot, only one (1) of such signs, where permitted may exceed twelve (12) square feet in net area.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing two projecting signs, one facing East Campus Mall and the other facing the parking lot to the east. Both signs would be 17.5' x 2.5', or 43.75 sq. ft. per side. The signs would not extend above the second story, keeping in mind the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines historic requirements.

Staff Comments: The sign ordinance allows for a projecting sign on the face of a building that faces a street. The projecting sign on the west side of the building faces the right-of-way of East Campus Mall, however the street has turned into a pedestrian walkway by that point. The other projecting sign (east side) would face the interior parking lot for the zoning lot, which is not a qualifying elevation. The reasoning for having a projecting sign on the parking lot side of the building is to help identify the hotel in the narrow line of view provided at the driveway entrance between 770 and 740 Regent Street, and for vehicles navigating to the hotel from Regent Street. The applicant is also requesting the signs to be 23.75 sq. ft. larger than what the code would allow. The argument provided for the size increase is to again help identify the building as well as be more in scale with the hotel's overall height. While the hotel is set back far from the street and does have limited visibility due to the office buildings sitting in front of it, staff believes 43.75 sq. ft. would be an excessively large sign in combination with the oversized canopy sign discussed below. In the elevations the applicant provides for the proposed sign, the projecting signs appears to be out-of-scale for the building, and feel that a smaller sign would fit better with the scale of the building. A projecting sign that is 32 sq. ft. per side would still be larger than what the code allows, but is permitted by the code for group 3 districts. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request for the projecting not facing a street, however, staff recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have not been met for the request for the 43.75 sq. ft. projecting signs. Instead, staff recommends the alternative of 32 sq. ft. projecting sign be approved.**

Canopy Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.071, above-canopy signs can be installed instead of wall signs, but are restricted to the business name and logo, be constructed of freestanding characters and the logo, have a max height of 2' and the next of the logo being a max size of 4 sq. ft. These signs also cannot be wider than the width of the canopy or the corresponding façade, whichever is narrower. Above-canopy signage may not project further than from the building than the canopy to which it is attached and a sign that crosses architectural detail may not be displayed closer than three feet from the nearest face of the building.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting an above canopy sign with a 4.13' tall logo and individual channel letters with a maximum height of 3' tall letters. Besides the size, the applicant is requesting the CDR approval to have an above canopy sign in addition to a wall sign, as the applicant plans on installing a relatively small 3.24 sq. ft. pedestrian-oriented wall sign near the lobby doors of the hotel.

Staff Comments: The above canopy signs provides identification for the main entrance of the building when first entering the lot from the driveway between the buildings on Regent Street. As noted by the applicant, the building is set back about 220 feet from the street, with existing development in front of it, creating limited visibility from the street. The sign is of high design, consisting of individual channel letters that would glow red at night, and appear to more in scale with the building than the code compliant 2 foot tall letters, as the applicant provided in the packet. Staff feels that the above canopy sign more adequately identifies the building and

entrance point than the projecting sign to the east side of the building. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Parking Lot Signage Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.03(2) and 31.044(1)(I), parking lot directional signage are necessary for safety or prompting traffic flow to a location on the premises on which the sign is located. These signs can be a maximum size of 3 sq. ft. with a maximum height of 10 ft., and two signs per street frontage. These types of signs are exempt from permits.

Parking lot regulation signs, on the other hand, designate the condition of use or identity of such parking areas. These signs can be a maximum of 9 sq. ft. and require a 10 ft. setback from the property line.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting a 16 sq. ft. parking lot directional signage located above the garage entryway, to provide direction to vehicles looking to park inside the building.

Staff Comments: The proposed sign appears oversized on the provided elevations, and the applicant does not provide any reasoning for being larger than what the code would otherwise allow. Staff feels a code compliant sign is sufficient for directing vehicles to the garage entry, as the traffic and speed limit in the parking lot will be limited. **Staff recommends UDC find the CDR standards are not met and refer the request for more information, or deny the request for a monument ground sign taller than what would be otherwise allowed.**

Notes:

- Applicant shall add the note that all other signage not addressed in this CDR comply with Chapter 31.

Other signage shown in the application:

- The small ground sign is to be parking lot directional sign and the net is not to exceed 3 sq. ft. per size, should otherwise comply with Chapter 31, and not need special exceptions in this CDR.
- The monument styled ground sign near the driveway is under different ownership than the hotel's and is shown for context purposes only. A separate application to amend that existing CDR will need to be applied for approval of the ground sign.