

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

June 15, 2022



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 231 South Pinckney Street
Project Name: Embassy Suites
Application Type: Approval for Comprehensive Design Review of Signage
Legistar File ID # [70889](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review of signage for the new Judge Doyle Square hotel currently under construction. The property is part of a Planned Development (PD) district, which allows for signs as permitted in a Downtown Core (DC) district. The applicant is requesting for two projecting signs larger than code permits, two wall signs on the same street-facing elevation as well as an above canopy sign. This lot abuts East Doty Street (two lanes, 25 mph), South Pinckney Street (two lanes, 25 mph), and East Wilson Street (two 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.*

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 of 20 sq. ft. per side based on the number of traffic lanes.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing two projecting signs, one facing East Doty Street and the other facing East Wilson Street. Both signs would be 1' 4" x 14' 8", or 19.56 sq. ft. per side. The sign facing Doty Street would technically extend above the floor of the third story, while the projecting sign facing East Wilson Street would be mounted between the first and second floor. The signs consist of internally illuminated cabinets with routed out aluminum faces and backed with acrylic, and translucent green vinyl on the logos.

Staff Comments: The proposed signs comply with the sign ordinance, however as this site is also located in the downtown area, the signs also need to comply with the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines. The UDC predominately requires signage to be located no higher than the second story, except for some of the sites which have obtained special approval from the UDC (images provided in the applicant's submittal, however staff would not agree that these set "precedence"). Due to the uneven terrain at the site, the first floor by Doty Street is partially recessed below grade, which causes the projecting sign to extend about a foot above the floor of the third story. The size and scale of the projecting signs appear appropriate for the building and will provide the hotel visibility to traffic along Doty Street and Wilson Street. The signs appear to match the color of the material surrounding the windows, and has an appealing contrast to the lighter building material surrounding the signs. Also, the font matches the other proposed signage for the building, creating a cohesive look.

Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Canopy Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.071, signs may be displayed on a canopy fascia in lieu of a wall sign. Above-canopy signs can be installed instead of canopy fascia signs, but are restricted to the business name and logo. The sign shall consist of freestanding characters and are limited to a maximum height of 2'. A logo is also permitted, however it is not limited in height. Instead the logo may only have a maximum net area 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 proposed above canopy signage consists of two foot tall internally illuminated individual channel letters, with a total net area of 76.67 sq. ft.

Staff Comments: The proposed sign is of a compliant size, however as the applicant is also requesting for two walls signs on the same elevation as the above canopy sign, the proposed sign needs a CDR exception. The above canopy sign will provide visibility of the hotel main entrance from further away, whereas the small wall signs will only be legible up close. The size and scale of the sign appears appropriate for the hotel and the font of the channel letters matches other proposed signage for the building. **Recommendation:** Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Wall Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.07, there shall be one signable area for each façade facing a street or parking lot 33 feet in width or greater. For a single occupancy, stand-alone, non-residential building with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area, or a non-residential occupancy or tenant space with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area in a multi-tenant building, the maximum net area of all wall signs shall be thirty percent (30%) of the signable area. In no case shall a wall sign exceed one hundred twenty (120) square feet in net area

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting two wall signs, one on either side of the entrance located on South Pinckney Street. These signs are identified as the hotel plaques in the application. Each sign would have a total net area of 1.875 sq. ft. Each sign appears to be no more than 30% of the signable area, however staff is not able to confirm this as the signable area dimensions were not provided. These signs are made of steel with etched graphics.

Staff Comments: As the applicant is already proposing an above canopy sign on front facade, a wall sign is not permissible, and therefore must be approved with a CDR exception. The applicant states the two proposed wall signs are important identification for pedestrians on South Pinckney Street, as the above canopy sign would not be visible. The two signs would also create a symmetrical look and reinforces the building's entry. The signs are small, oriented at a pedestrian scale, and would blend in with the building material. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Notes:

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