

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

December 1, 2021



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 825 East Washington Avenue
Project Name: Moxy Hotel
Application Type: Approval for Comprehensive Design Review of Signage
Legistar File ID # [67177](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review of signage for new hotel and restaurant. This parcel is located in a Traditional Employment (TE) District, as well as Urban Design District #8, and abuts East Washington Avenue (6 lanes, of 25 mph) and East Main Street (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.*

Section 33.24(15)(e)10., Signage Criteria for Urban Design District No. 8, indicates the Urban Design Commission shall consider in each case those of the following guidelines and requirements as may be appropriate to signage:

a. Guidelines.

- i. Preferred sign types include building mounted signs, window signs, projecting signs, and awning signs.
- ii. Signs should be simple and easy to read.
- iii. Sign colors should relate to and complement the primary colors of the building facade.
- iv. Sign design and placement should fit the character of the building and not obscure architectural details.
- v. Signage should generally be centered within the prescribed signable area of the building.
- vi. Plastic box signs are highly discouraged.
- vii. Signs displaying illuminated copy should be designed so that when illuminated, the sign appears to have light-colored copy on a dark or non-illuminated background.
- viii. Individually mounted backlit letters are an encouraged form of signage.
- ix. The use of small, well-designed building-mounted light fixtures is a preferred method of illuminating signage.
- x. Freestanding signs should be attractively designed. Signs should be coordinated with adjoining properties and public street signage to avoid visual clutter.

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 buildings with more than one tenant, each tenant is allowed a signable area as reasonably close to its tenant space as possible. Standard net area allows for 40% of the signable area, or two square feet of signage for each lineal foot of building frontage not to exceed 100% of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 80 sq. ft. in net area. For tenant spaces exceeding 25,000 sq. ft. of floor area, the maximum wall sign shall not exceed 30% of the signable area and 120 sq. ft.

Signable area is defined in the code as “one designated area of the facade of the building up to the roof line that is free of doors, windows (for purposes of this definition, spandrel panels or other non-vision glass used as an exterior building material are not considered windows) or other major architectural detail, that extends no higher than the juncture of the wall and the roof.”

Proposed Signage: The applicant is proposing three wall signs for the site. One sign will face East Washington Ave (sign 1), mounted on an architectural feature above the main entrance. The sign size and design is larger than the narrow signable area, and therefore needs CDR approval for crossing architectural detail. The proposed sign is open faced channel letters with neon LED tubing inside, and appears to have a net area of 30.1 sq. ft. (boxing has not been provided).

The second wall sign (sign 5) is located on the south side of the building, facing the driveway, which does not have a qualifying signable area. The applicant has not provided sign construction details, so it is unclear if it will be of the same materials as the other proposed signs on this site. It appears the proposed sign would have a net area of 7.53 sq. ft., however boxing has not been provided. The signable area has not been provided for this area, it appears to be less than 30%.

The third wall sign (sign 3) will face East Main Street, and will be installed on an accessory building designed which will house the generator and refuse for the site. As this building is not actually occupied by the tenant, this building

would not qualify for signage, and therefore needs CDR approval. The proposed wall sign consists of internal and halo illumination individual channel letters for Moxy, and ¼" thick cutout letters for Hotel. It appears to have a total net area of 30.87 sq. ft., although boxing was not provided, and would occupy about 20% of the signable area.

Staff Comments: Placing a wall sign on this building is challenging, as the facades are highly articulated, providing signable areas of limited locations and size. There are some larger signable areas higher up on the building, however the UDC has consistently seen the Urban Design District No. 8 as extension of the downtown area, which doesn't permit signage above the second story. Most qualifying signable areas are either narrow vertical or horizontal areas, which don't work with the hotel brand design with the swooping "y". The proposed location for the main wall sign (sign 1) makes sense, as it is located above the main entrance on East Washington Avenue, and wouldn't be the first uniquely designed sign to cross architectural detail. The Gebhardt sign, while a different type of sign, also crosses architectural detail to simultaneously sit above and partially on the canopy fascia. The sign is made of high quality material and is of similar design and colors to other signs found on the site.

For the second wall sign (sign 5), the applicant is requesting CDR approval as the elevation does not have a qualifying signable area since it does not face a street or parking lot. The proposed sign is desired to direct pedestrians to the walk-up service window, which is located about 55' from the sidewalk and located in a recess of the building façade. There is no other signage that would indicate the location for the service window, and the service window would not appear to be easily seen from the sidewalk, so having a directional sign makes sense. The sign design is unclear if it will be a routed aluminum face like the projecting and ground sign, but UDC could make that a condition of approval, if approved.

The third wall sign (sign 3) is also located on a wall that is not considered a qualifying signable area, as it is located on an accessory building and not occupiable by the tenant. The applicant notes that this will be the only sign that identifies the hotel on East Main Street. This wall is the closest to the street, and to place it on the building, which is further in the site, would make it harder to see from the street. The sign is similar in design and color as the wall sign facing East Washington Avenue, as well as similar in net area.

Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR requests, with the condition that sign 5 be of similar material to the other signage proposed for the site, 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.

Projecting Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed a projecting sign 32 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 a projecting sign (sign 2) that would have a net area of 20.42 sq. ft. per side, and would project just below the third story. The sign design shows routed aluminum faces with push-thru acrylic lettering for the hotel and future restaurant. As the applicant is also requesting a ground sign that is larger than 12 sq. ft. in net area, CDR approval is needed.

Staff Comments: The projecting sign (sign 2) is of a compliant size, but as the applicant is also requesting for a ground sign over 12 sq. ft. in net area, a CDR exception is required. The applicant states that the size of the projecting sign is "*essential for streamlining the flow of traffic*" and "*allow for the restaurant and hotel to be identified at a pedestrian level for foot traffic.*" That being said, the projecting sign and the ground sign are similar in content, and both intended to be viewed from East Washington Avenue. This introduces some aspects of sign clutter, and duplicate signage does not seem essential. The projecting sign is of similar material and design as the main ground sign. **Recommendation: Staff would support either a projecting sign or a ground sign for this site, but does not**

believe the applicant has satisfied the criteria for CDR approval for having both being over 12 sq. ft., and recommends the UDC find the criteria for CDR review have not been met and refer the request for more information or deny the request as submitted. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 96 sq. ft., a maximum of 48 sq. ft. per side, and a maximum height of 16' for pole style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes. 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.

Summarizing Section 31.03(2) and 31.044(1)(l), parking lot directional signage are necessary for safety or directing traffic flow to a location on the premises on which the sign is located. These signs can be a maximum net area 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.

Proposed Ground Signage: The applicant is requesting one main ground sign and a parking lot directional sign. The proposed main sign is a 6' 5" tall, internally illuminated, double sided pole sign, with a total net area of 34.43 sq. ft., and located in front of the hotel on East Washington Ave. The sign design shows routed aluminum faces with push-thru acrylic lettering for the hotel and future restaurant. As the applicant is also requesting a projecting sign that is larger than 12 sq. ft. in net area, CDR approval is needed.

The parking lot directional sign is 4' tall, internally illuminated, double sided monument sign, with a net area of 8 sq. ft. per side, which is 5 sq. ft. larger than what the code permits. The sign would be an aluminum cabinet with plastic faces.

Staff Comments: The proposed size and net area of the main ground sign (sign 4) complies with code, but as the applicant is also requesting for a ground sign over 12 sq. ft. in net area, CDR exception is required. Besides the reasoning provided for the projecting sign above, no additional information relative to the criteria for CDR approval has been provided for needing both the ground sign and the projecting sign, located generally in the same area. As stated above, staff believes having both signs in the same space creates clutter and displays similar content.

As for the parking lot directional sign (sign 6), the applicant notes the sign is for guest safety, and a smaller sign would risk being over looked. However, when looking at the site plan, it shows the parking area that is designed to allow for vehicles to enter and exit from this point. Placing the sign at the entrance of the driveway will cause confusion when visitors come to the site. Instead, "Do Not Enter" signage should be placed further into the lot, where it is shown to only have one way traffic and as approved by Traffic Engineering. NOTE: the submitted site plan shows "do not enter" signage at points where traffic must be controlled.

Recommendation: Staff does not believe the applicant has satisfied the criteria for CDR approval for having the oversized parking lot directional sign, and recommends the UDC find the criteria for CDR review have not been met and refer the request for more information or deny the request as submitted. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Staff would support a either a projecting sign or a ground sign for this site, but does not believe the applicant has satisfied the criteria for CDR approval for having both being over 12 sq. ft., and recommends the UDC find the criteria for CDR review have not been met and refer the request for more information or deny the request as submitted. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Notes:

- It should be noted in the final CDR “Future signage submittals not specifically addressed by this document shall comply with the standards of Chapter 31.”
- Site plan showing signage locations will show the ground signs located out of the vision triangles.
- Remove note from pages 2, 4, 5, and 7. The sign ordinance does not permit 50% of signable area.
- Correct projecting sign boxing (all boxes must touch).