

## ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 27, 2022



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 235 Junction Road  
**Project Name:** BuyBuyBaby  
**Application Type:** Approval for a Signage Variance Request  
**Legistar File ID #** [70675](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting approval for a Signage Variance for the front and rear facade. This property is located in a Planned Development (PD) District and is part of the Prairie Towne Center zoning lot. This property is zoned PD, but was assigned in 2016 the equivalent zoning district Commercial Center (CC) for regulating signage as permitted in the code. This zoning lot abuts Mineral Point Road (6 lanes, 35 mph), Junction Road (4 lanes, 30 mph), and West Beltline Highway (4 lanes, 55 mph).

Pursuant to Section 31.043(2), MGO, the UDC may approve a sign with up to fifty percent (50%) greater net area or fifty percent (50%) higher than the maximum height otherwise allowed, or reduce the required yard or setback if such approval:

- (a) Is necessary for a sign located on the site of an establishment to be identifiable and legible from the nearest roadway at prevailing speeds; and
- (b) Will result in a sign more in scale with the building and site and in a superior overall design.

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 tenant space with less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet in floor area, the maximum net area of wall signs shall be forty percent (40%) of the signable area, or two feet per lineal foot of tenant frontage, not to exceed 100% of the signable area. In no case shall a wall sign exceed eighty (80) square feet in net area.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting two wall signs 50% larger than what the code allows, with the front facade facing Junction Road and the rear façade facing the Beltline Highway. They show these signs to be about 120 sq. ft. in net area, which would occupy 24% of the signable area on the front facade and 38% of the signable area on the rear facade.

Staff Comments: In 2020, UDC approved a similar variance request for the Target on this zoning lot, which permitted two wall signs at 180 sq. ft. and occupy 15% of the signable area on both the front and rear elevations. Likewise, buybuyBaby's front façade is nearly 580' from the curb face of Junction Road, which has a right-of-width of 120'. The applicant has provided examples of the front façade showing a code compliant sign at 80 sq. ft. and a sign 50% larger at 120 sq. ft. These examples show how inadequate the visibility of the code compliant sign is from Junction Road, as well as how the 120 sq. ft. sign fits better in the large signable area on the front façade. They also show how the requested sign appears to be of similar size and scale to most of the other tenant signs facing Junction Road, with the exception of Bed Bath & Beyond, which was approved when the signage was still controlled by the PD in 1997.

As for the sign on the rear elevation, which faces the Beltline Highway, the façade is approximately 150 feet to edge of pavement on the highway exit lane and has a right-of way width 315'. The requested sign would also have a net area of 120 sq. ft. on this elevation, however the signable area is 187 sq. ft. smaller than on the front façade, making the proposed sign occupy 38% of the signable area. While this technically would still be under

the 40% permitted in the code, staff does not believe the requested sign fits with the scale and size of the other tenant signage found on the back elevation, as shown in the examples of a code compliant sign and the proposed sign on the rear elevations. The code compliant sign, on the other hand, would occupy 25.5% of the signable area, similar to how much the sign on the front façade would occupy. Furthermore, while Target did obtain approval for a larger sign for the rear façade, the signable area was the same size as the front façade, and the sign occupied 15% of the signable area. It also should be noted that there is a large multi-tenant ground sign between the building and the Beltline, which is easily visible to the vehicular traffic exiting onto Mineral Point Road. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the Variance request for the wall sign on the front façade and recommends the UDC find the standards for variance review have been met. However, staff recommends the UDC find the variance criteria has not been met for the 120 sq. ft. wall sign on the rear façade. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**