



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1050 E. Washington Avenue
Application Type: Other – Signs in an UDD, Comprehensive Design Review Amendment
Legistar File ID #: 70520
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary
Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Director

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Fetch Rewards | Allie Novitske, Sign Art Studio

Project Description: The applicant is seeking Final Approval of a Comprehensive Design Review [signage] amendment to allow for two wall signs above the first floor that extend past a signable area as a result of the signs wrapping building corners, and for a second sign for an occupant on the same facade, in Urban Design District No. 8.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (“UDC”) is an approving body on this request. The project site is located in Urban Design District 8 (“UDD 8”), which notes that “All development in the District (including, but not limited to new buildings or structures, additions to existing buildings or structures, street graphics and new parking facilities...) shall require approval of the Urban Design Commission...”. As part of their review, the UDC shall evaluate signage for consistency with the design guidelines outlined in UDD 8, and in the UDC’s consistent practice of treating this area as an extension of the greater downtown area.

In addition, the proposed wall signage was not included in the original Comprehensive Design Review (“CDR”) approval, or UDC Final Approval. As such an amendment to the existing CDR is required to clarify the allowable signage on this elevation. As part of their review, the UDC shall also evaluate the proposed wall signage for consistency with the CDR review criteria as outlined in Sec. 31.043(4), MGO.

Project Background and Site Context

Project Background. Originally approved in January 2, 2019, the Arden, otherwise known as Lyric Phase 3, included the development of an 11-story mixed-use building, including commercial/retail, office and market rate residential uses, and a four-story building housing the Youth Arts Consortium (Legistar No. 53254). As part of the Final Approval, and as noted on the plans on file, sign areas and types were included on the final building elevations. In this case, the East Washington Avenue façade elevations included wall signs for first-floor tenant spaces and two projecting signs for the upper story tenant spaces, as pictured in the images below.





In March 2021, a CDR ([Legistar No. 64508](#)) was approved for the development that focused primarily on signage for the Madison Youth Arts Organization. In particular, the CDR included approvals for three ground signs. In addition, the CDR noted that *“signage for the Arden commercial tenants facing East Washington Avenue will also comply with the Sign Ordinance.”* As noted above, when the building architecture was approved, two projecting signs were shown facing East Washington Avenue. The originally anticipated projecting signs comply with Chapter 31 and could be approved administratively. As proposed, the additional wall signs are not code compliant; they wrap the corners of the building, projecting outside of signable areas by about six inches and include two signs for one tenant on the same façade. Such requests may only be reviewed and approved as part of a CDR.

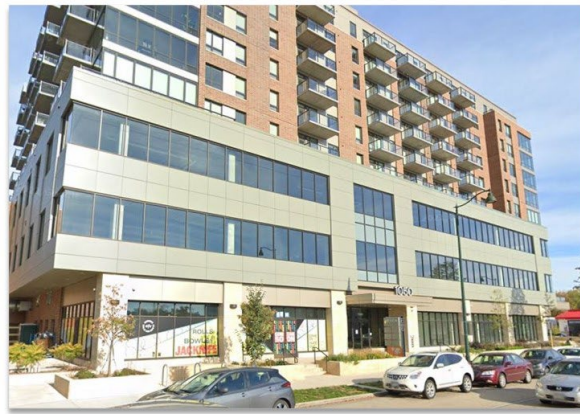
In April 2022, the UDC reviewed a CDR request for five wall signs to be located along the E Washington Avenue frontage to be mounted above the first floor, below the third floor, floor line. The UDC did not grant this request, but did approve a projecting sign as follows:

“Approval of a single blade sign for single tenant use or multi-tenant use that falls under the third floor, floor line to be located within the vertical building element at the far right (northeast corner) of the building.”

Site Context. For contextual purposes, please refer to the images provided below for existing signage within the project site block, sign types, and wall signage found within UDD 8.

Sign Types within UDD 8 – Project Site/Block

(from top to bottom: Lyric and Arden)

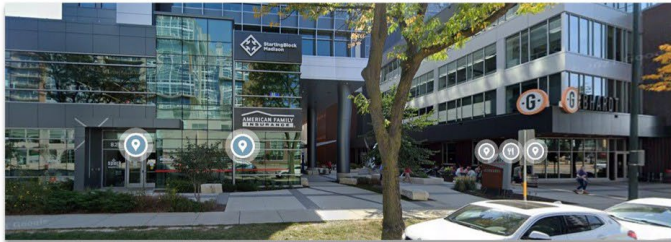


Sign Types within UDD 8

- Window signs on upper floors
- Multi-tenant projecting signs
- Projecting signs

(from bottom left to bottom right: Galaxy, Galaxy, Constellation)





Wall Signage within UDD 8

- Limited to two per street frontage on upper stories
- Clear sign areas
- CDR Approval

(from top left to bottom right: Spark, Gebhardt Building, Festival Foods)



Wall Signs Permitted by the Sign Code. Pursuant to Chapter 31, 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 space, each tenant is allowed a signable area as reasonably close to its tenant space as possible. The maximum net area of the sign shall be no more than forty percent (40%) of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 80 sq. ft. in net area. For multi-story buildings with more than one vertical occupancy, *there may be up to two additional signable areas per façade displayed above the first story, with no limitation on the height of placement, but only one sign per occupant, per façade.*

Chapter 31 allows for up to **two additional signable areas** per street facing façade, above the first story, with no limitation on height of placement. With regard to the first floor signage, the code allows for **one signable area per tenant space**, to be located as close to the tenant space as possible. **As proposed, the two sign areas on the E Washington Avenue façade, for a single tenant are not consistent with the Sign Code.**

Design Considerations

Staff requests the Commission's feedback and findings on the design considerations noted below as they relate to the sign guidelines and requirements in UDD 8 and the CDR review and approval criteria. A staff analysis is included below as it relates to the UDD 8 design guidelines and requirements, as well as CDR review and approval criteria, including those that specifically speak to preferred sign types, illumination, and character, as well as the CDR criteria that speaks to creating visual harmony, maintaining character consistent with redevelopment in the corridor and generally consistent with signage in the greater downtown area.

1. **Proposed Sign Type.** Is the shift from a projecting sign type to a wall sign type consistent with design intent of the Final Approval, applicable UDD 8 design guidelines, and CDR review criteria?

Consideration should be given to the overall design aesthetic and existing context within UDD 8, and the appropriateness of the proposed sign type as it relates to the tenant space, streetscape, and building architecture.

Staff Analysis: Staff believes that the proposed signage would satisfy the UDD 8 guidelines and requirements, as well as the CDR standards for review and maintain consistency with other

signage in the corridor, including those that speak to enhanced design, preferred sign type, and context.

Although the proposed wall sign would present a change from the originally anticipated projecting signage, it is among the preferred sign types noted within the UDD 8 guidelines and requirements. The proposed signage follows similar design characteristics of other signage within UDD 8, including those that speak to enhanced design as the proposed incorporates texture and depth not only from the wall behind it, but also within the sign itself with punched letters and graphics and an illuminated frame.

The proposed sign locations, one at each end of the building are in close proximity to the tenant space, for which the tenant occupies the entire second floor, with plans to expand into the third floor as well. The proposed signs are situated on each end of the building, wrapping the corner, each at the northeast and southeast ends of the building, within a “framed” sign area, visible from different street frontages and directions. While the sign location is above the first floor, it is below the third floor, floor line, consistent with other wall signage in the corridor, past practice, and the previous UDC conditions of approval.

2. **Proposed Sign Location.** Is the proposed wall sign area consistent with the applicable UDD 8 design guidelines and CDR review criteria, including those that speak to the integration of signage with architectural details, materials, style, character, etc.?

Due consideration should not only be given to the design of the proposed wall sign, but also potential future signage as it relates to its location above the first story.

Staff Analysis Summary: Staff believes that this location presents a unique and unusual design aesthetic and that the proposed sign wall signs would satisfy this criteria.

As noted in both the historical precedent and contextual images provided above, wall signage has been historically limited throughout the corridor, in terms of location and number. Typically, these sign areas are located at building corners and within identifiable sign areas. In addition, the proposed signage presents an enhanced or unique design that incorporates texture and depth and interesting lighting into the sign design, incorporating the sign into the overall building architecture.

In their proposed location wrapping the end-corners of the building, the proposed wall signs introduce a new sign area that is limited in size and location on the building. This location is in proximity to the originally anticipated projecting signage for the building, consistent with the locations of other wall signage within the corridor at building corners and below the third floor, floor height, as well as the previous UDC conditions of approval which limited the location and mounting height. In addition, this location is well integrated within the building design and materials, which serve as a background providing a “frame” for the proposed sign.

3. **Precedential Considerations.** In reviewing past practices, wall signage above the first story has been limited within the East Washington Avenue corridor. As noted above, past Comprehensive Design Review approvals have limited wall signage in number (two per street frontage) and location (to clearly identifiable sign areas that are integrated in the overall building architecture). Staff notes potential precedential considerations with regard to the proposed wall sign areas, specifically as it relates to:

- Consistency with past practices within the corridor and prevalent sign types;

- The overall impact to the general appearance of the building façade and creating sign clutter;
- Sign visibility given the streetscape, traffic speeds, street classification, etc.; and
- Lack of a clearly identifiable sign area.

Staff Analysis Summary: While consideration should still be given to future additional wall signage, those considerations would require CDR review and approval as well. To ensure that future signage does not create sign clutter and is appropriately located on the building, **staff recommends that all future wall signage above the first floor be required to be reviewed and approved as an amendment to this CDR.**

Recommendations and Conditions

Staff recommends that the UDC review the request and make findings based on the relevant guidelines and standards of UDD 8 Sec. 33.24(15) and the CDR review and approval standards pursuant to [Sec. 31.043\(4\)](#), MGO.

Overall, given the surrounding context and the enhanced design reflected in proposed sign graphic, staff believes that the proposed signage can be found to be consistent with the CDR review and approval criteria, as well as the UDD 8 guidelines and requirements for signage as follows:

- The proposed location being in an identifiable sign area, fitting within the building's architectural features, design and materials,
- The proposed signage being a preferred sign type,
- The proposed sign type being consistent with other sign types and locations within the surrounding context and character present within the corridor,
- Creating visual harmony with the building design,
- The proposed sign design providing an enhanced design aesthetic, including texture, color, and depth.

If the UDC can find that the proposed sign meets the applicable review and approval criteria, as well as the UDD 8 guidelines and requirements, staff recommends the following conditions of approval:

1. Future wall signage, above the first floor shall be reviewed and approved as part of an amendment to this CDR.

UDD 8 – Sign Design Guidelines – Staff Analysis - Section 33.24(15)(e)(10)(a), MGO:

- 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.

Comprehensive Design Review – Review Criteria – Staff Analysis - Section 31.043(4)(b), MGO:

1. The proposal 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 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 proposal shall not violate any of the stated purposes described in Secs. 31.02(1) and 33.24(2).
4. All signs must meet minimum construction requirements under Sec.31.04(5).
5. The proposal 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 proposal 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 proposal 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.