

## ZONING STAFF REPORT

January 2, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 810 E. Washington Avenue  
**Project Name:** The Galaxie  
**Application Type:** Approval for an Alteration to an Approved Comprehensive Design Plan  
**Legistar File ID #** [53833](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

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The applicant is requesting an amendment to a previously approved Comprehensive Design Review. The original approval was obtained in 2015, for 10 projecting signs each 32 sq. ft. per side and allowing up to two ground signs sharing a combined total of 72 sq. ft. of net area, to be used for identification of commercial tenants on the first three floors. The applicant is requesting to increase the allowance of the ground signage up to 144 sq. ft. of net area, to be shared between two ground signs. The property is located in the Traditional Employment (TE) district and is boarded by East Washington Avenue (6 lanes, 35 mph), North Paterson Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), East Mifflin Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), and North Livingston Street (2 lanes, 25 mph).

Pursuant to Section 31.43(4)(d), MGO, any changes to the approved plan must first be approved by the UDC using the full Comprehensive Design Review (CDR) process under Sec. 31.043(4)(a):

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.*

**Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance:** This zoning lot is allowed up to two (2) ground signs with a combined net area of 144 sq. ft., a maximum of 72 sq. ft. per side, and a maximum height of 11' for monument style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes. Additionally, if a ground and projecting signs are displayed on the same zoning lot, only one (1) of such signs, where permitted may exceed twelve (12) square feet in net area (an exception to this requirement was previously granted).

**Proposed Ground Signage:** The applicant is looking to increase the allowed *net area* square footage shared between the two signs from 72 sq. ft. to 144 sq. ft. The applicant also proposes the design for a new second ground sign. The second ground sign they are looking to install will have a total net area of 39.18 sq. ft., with a height of 8.33'. The proposed sign appears to be intended to serve as identification signage for two tenant spaces on the northeast end of the building.

**Staff Comments:** The approved CDR is somewhat unusual, as the language self-restricts net area for ground signs to a single total amount, which may be divided among multiple sign faces. The typical net area restriction for ground signs includes *a single sign face maximum size* and *a combined total for all faces maximum size*. Per discussions with the applicant, it appears as though an unintended clerical error is the reason for the omission of words that would otherwise allowed a combined total of net sign area of 144 sq. ft. for all signs. Staff agrees the CDR should be approved to allow a maximum of two double-sided ground signs, up to a maximum of 36 sq. ft. per side. However, the language in the CDR must change to allow for the additional signage, hence this alteration request. Increasing the allowed square footage of Net area to 144 sq. ft. will allow the UDC to consider a reasonably-sized second ground sign.

This property has one existing two-sided ground sign, with its design and placement approved by the Urban Design Commission as part of the CDR in 2015, measuring at 63 sq. ft. of net area. Per the current language in the CDR, this leaves 9 sq. ft. of net area remaining for a second ground sign.

The UDC retains the right to review and approve the proposed second ground sign, particularly given there is no detail in the CDR regarding design and placement for the second sign. NOTE: The UDC secretary is providing staff comments relative to the Urban Design District sign guidelines with a separate staff report.

The proposed sign is designed with materials that generally match the existing ground sign and materials on the building, but the tenant panels appear to be about three times larger on the proposed second ground sign in comparison to the existing ground sign. It does not seem clear that the scale and placement of the proposed sign meets CDR criteria 1 and 2, that there be visual harmony between the signs, be of appropriate scale and is necessary due to unique or unusual design aspects in the architecture or limitations in the building site or surrounding environment. **Staff does not have any reservations for increasing the Net square footage shared between the ground signs, however staff looks to UDC as to whether or not the proposed design of the second sign fits with the CDR criteria. Staff also recommends that if a second sign is approved, that any additional ground signs will require approval of the UDC as a major amendment to this CDR.**