

City of Madison, Wisconsin

---

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**PRESENTED:** June 6, 2012

TITLE: 2550 University Avenue – Alteration to a Previously Approved PUD(SIP), Permanent Real Estate Signage Package. 5<sup>th</sup> Ald. Dist. (25324)

**REFERRED:**

**REREFERRED:**

**REPORTED BACK:**

AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary

**ADOPTED:**

**POF:**

DATED: June 6, 2012

**ID NUMBER:**

---

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Dawn O’Kroley, Henry Lufler, Todd Barnett, Richard Slayton, Tom DeChant, Marsha Rummel and John Harrington.

**SUMMARY:**

At its meeting of June 6, 2012, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** for permanent real estate signage located at 2550 University Avenue. Appearing on behalf of the project were Brian Mullins, Brad Mullins, and Mary Beth Growney Selene, representing Ryan Signs, Inc. Appearing and speaking in opposition were Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, District 5 Alder; and John Schlaefer. Brian Mullins presented the signage plan, noting sign type 2 as the address of the building at the higher elevation of the building. There would be some illumination associated with that sign. Sign type 3 is the blade sign marking the main lobby; it was originally designed at 44-feet and is now 31-feet. They believe the vertical solution of the sign further compliments the architecture adjacent to the vertical stairwells and glass. Growney Selene showed a sample of lighting they are recommending to tenants on University Avenue who have brick frontage as it washes the building nicely. The remainder of the signs (located on canopies, sign type 1) will be internally illuminated. The basic design requires that it have a background for the light to halo.

John Schlaefer spoke in opposition, stating it is totally inappropriate and he does not see the need to go beyond what the zoning ordinance states. He was once a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals and does not agree that the ordinance creates a hardship.

Ald. Bidar-Sielaff spoke about feedback she has received from neighbors. The Type 2 signs (2550) on the west and east façades of the building are inappropriate with the context of the building and neighborhood. The building makes a statement by where it sits so differently than the rest of the neighborhood. It transitions from a lot of light and signs on the other side of Campus Drive to a neighborhood with softer lights and less signage. These signs are not appropriate for a mixed-use residential building. She sees no problem with branding the building at the street level and interacted with people. The fact that the building is located at both exits to the Veteran’s Hospital makes the need for such signage unnecessary. The Type 3 sign (blade sign) facing University Avenue was not approved as part of the architectural packet. If it is a sign, it’s not yet figured out as the Commission is being asked to approve this conceptually. She would prefer to see the full idea of the sign

before approval is granted. She urged the Commission to state that any future temporary signage will meet code.

Growney Selene stated they would like to make a change to the language under sign type to “miscellaneous and future signs” to “all other signs.” If there is a sign that has not been addressed, the applicant wants the Commission to know that it will meet code as of today. The only exception to the code requirements of C2 zoning is the blade sign with the size of the blade being larger than allowed.

Comments and questions from the Commission were as follows:

- I can't OK a sign without knowing its use and function.
- You need to work with the neighborhood. I'm concerned about the lighting, so coloration of the signs are going to be very important. The whole package is very architecturally bland.
  - Growney Selene asked that at minimum the numbers and tenant signage be allowed. Harrington felt this was a package that should be dealt with all at once.
- When you're on University it is a taller building than the others, but your eye should be drawn closer to the street level to where the information is located. You should keep the text down low and the blade sign interests me as an architectural element. It could be very interesting so long as the text is at pedestrian scale towards the ground floor, if it's an architectural element (Sign Type 3).
- The 2550 (Sign Type 2) should be lowered.
  - If it's designed for a pedestrian experience they aren't going to see them at almost any elevation. On Highland Avenue you could see it but for a vehicle on Campus Drive anything lower than that proposed height is covered by trees until you get right to the building. If you don't permit us to have signs for addresses, the building opens July 1<sup>st</sup> and most of the occupants will move in at that time.
- I don't think Sign Type 2 works. It's a kinetic building and the sign on top seems garish; it's not integrated with the architecture and the size is over-scaled. It looks more like an afterthought. This sign should definitely be held back from any kind of approval.
- Is the intent of the language for miscellaneous and future signs to simply allow you to come in with a sign for whatever would be normally allowed by code without going through the Urban Design Commission process?
  - Yes, like temporary real estate signage would be limited to 32 square feet. That's a sign that's not called out.

Is that typical?

(Tucker): Yes, non-commercial signs.

- How big is 1A3? We recently approved signage for the new building at Park and Regent, and I think those QDoba signs are way too small. In terms of the scale with the building...I'd like to think about that sign in terms of these signs. The scale of the building to street is about the same.
  - That was the owner's decision.

The Regent Park intersection is such a big area. This is a bit more of an intimate street.

- Signage in a situation like this, it self-regulates. For example, if I have the middle space and simply want to say “Ryan Signs,” my maximum height is 24 inches. If I put Ryan Signs up there in 24 inches it is never going to get to the maximum sign length. Conversely, if I have the name of “QDoba Mexican Grill & Eatery & Bar,” I'm going to self-regulate by length not by height.

If you could present a number of options that are reasonable for this location that would help.

## **ACTION:**

On a motion by Harrington, seconded by Slayton, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** the “2550” upper elevation sign and the blade sign, and **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of the private garage signs, the address numbers, tenant signage and the signable areas. The motion was passed on a unanimous vote of (7-0). The motion provided for the following:

- The private garage signs and numeral with addresses are approved. The signable areas for the retail/commercial uses are alright, but come back with details, illustrations and examples of halo lit signage which is preferred, as well as details on internally illuminated letters, and internally illuminated cabinet signs as they relate to the signable areas for the Commission to discuss. Provide examples of halo lit signage which is preferred, as well as details on internally illuminated letters.
- Further investigate and detail the “blade signage” as an architectural feature with signage at the street level.
- Permanent real estate signage as allowed under the Sign Control Ordinance (MGO 31).

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 6 and 7.

**URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 2550 University Avenue**

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
<b>Member Ratings</b>	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7
	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	6

General Comments:

- Interesting package but need details.
- Sign types 2 and 3 are not acceptable.