

ZONING STAFF REPORT

September 26, 2018



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 2164 West Beltline Hwy
Project Name: Steinhafels
Application Type: Approval for an Alteration to an Approved Comprehensive Design Plan
Legistar File ID # [52900](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting an amendment to a previously approved Comprehensive Design Review. This zoning lot has existing CDR approvals for the Northern Tool logo size and location, the Sky Zone wall sign location and 50% increase in net size of sign allowed, the Unity Point wall sign allowing a wall sign to be 30% of the signable area; as well as the number and size of ground signs on this zoning lot. This lot is zoned Commercial Center (CC), facing West Beltline Highway, which is 6 lanes and 55 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.*

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 a tenant space with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area in a multi-tenant building, the maximum net area of all wall signs shall be thirty percent (30%) of the signable area. **In no case shall a wall sign exceed one hundred twenty (120) square feet in net area.** The signable area for a wall signs is determined by the area of the facade of the building that is free of doors, windows, or other major architectural detail, and **no more than four (4) vertical feet of the parapet wall may be included in the measurement of the signable area.**

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting approval for a 10' x 36' (360 sq. ft.) wall sign, 18.5 feet above the roofline. The signable area is boxed incorrectly on the application, as it is not a rectangle shape and crosses architectural detail. Based on scaled plans, the signable area about 21.96' tall (cornice to color change) by 45.96' wide (cornice to cornice), making the signable area about 1009 sq. ft. 30% of the signable area about 302 sq. ft. while the proposed sign is roughly 36% of the signable area.

Staff Comments: Improvements at this property involve a redesign of the facade and new signage. The applicant chose to proceed with the facade approval in advance of the signage approval. Staff recommended the façade and signage be reviewed at the same meeting, however the applicant chose to proceed with the façade first, and it was made clear to the applicant that staff was opposed to the signage proposal. The façade change was reviewed and approved the September 5 2018 UDC meeting.

This zoning lot has had a number of CDR approvals over the years. Northern Tool has a CDR approval for the size of the logo, located more than 4' above the roofline. Sky Zone has a CDR approval for a 120 sq. ft. sign, which is 50% larger than what the code allows for this tenant space, and located higher than 4' above the roofline. Unit Point has a CDR approval that allows for a wall sign up to 30% of the signable area. Culvers has a CDR for the height of the ground sign. This zoning lot also has CDR approval for having three ground signs and the combined net square footage, including Steinhafels ground sign, which is 9' taller than what the code allows, and 53.5 sq. ft. over the allowed maximum net area. Our records state that the previous wall sign approved for Steinhafels was 215 sq. ft. for Steinhafels (5' x 43') and 60 sq. ft. for Furniture Store (2' x 30'), totaling to 275 sq. ft. With the new parapet, even though the height has slightly decreased, the signable area has significantly increased, and the CDR request would be an 85 sq. ft. increase from what was previously approved. Staff does not support such an increase of the sign size, especially in consideration of the previously approved CDRs for other tenants on this zoning lot. Unity has a wall sign not to exceed 30% of the façade, Sky Zone's approved wall sign is under 24% of the signable area, and Northern Tools main wall sign is approved at about 30% of the signable area. The building on this zoning lot is placed far back on the lot, with an expansive parking lot located in front of it; however Steinhafels already has a 22' tall monument-style ground sign (9' taller than what the code allows) with their sign at 129.5 sq. ft. net per side.

CDR approval standard No. 2 relates to necessity for signage based on a uniqueness of the site, and because the façade design comes from the applicant who is also in control of the facade change, meeting this standard with the proposal seems difficult. The signage appears excessive, and is not supported with arguments relative to the standard as submitted by the applicant. Staff believes it would be reasonable that some exception to the sign code can be found consistent with the standards of approval for CDR, however, as submitted, the standard does not appear to be met. **Staff recommends the UDC refer the request for more study, including the possibility of a façade redesign that takes signage into consideration with the facade redesign, including code requirements. Otherwise, if UDC does determine the CDR criteria have been met, as submitted, that the sign be reduced in size, not exceed 30% of the signable area.**

Notes:

- The application includes a graphic showing the Ashley Furniture Store to the west of this site (former American TV site). This property is not part of this zoning lot, and is located in the Town of Madison. Thus, this site does not fall under the jurisdiction of the City's sign code. Due to this condition, staff does not know how this signage would relate to the City's sign code requirements.
- Signable area must be correctly dimensioned on the final submittal, if approved.