



<b>Agenda Item #:</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Project Title:</b>	34 Schroeder Court - Amendment to a Comprehensive Design Review of Signage (CDR) in Urban Design District (UDD) 2. 19th Ald. Dist.
<b>Legistar File ID #:</b>	78778
<b>Members Present:</b>	Cliff Goodhart, Chair; Wendy Von Below, Rafeeq Asad, Christian Harper, Jessica Klehr, Russell Knudson, and Marsha Rummel
<b>Prepared By:</b>	Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Summary

At its meeting of August 16, 2023, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL** of an amendment to an existing Comprehensive Design Review of Signage (CDR) located at 34 Schroeder Court in Urban Design District (UDD) 2. Registered and speaking in support was Mary Beth Growney Selene.

Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Director gave a brief overview of the request, noting the proposed letter signage on a solid backer is inconsistent with the existing CDR.

The 2013 approval called for up to five tenant signs on the north elevation, illuminated letters to be mounted on raceways; raceway is not defined in the code. The purpose of the raceway is to reduce penetrations in the mounting façade, as well as house electrical components. It is an installation that is preferred by some building owners as tenants switch out. The proposed sign with backer panel is consistent with the intent of the 2013 CDR as it is individual channel letters mounted on a backer or raceway with both back lit letters and internal illumination. The 2013 CDR specified color, design and incorporation of logos is up to individual tenants. The proposed sign creates visual harmony between the signs, building and building site.

The Commission had the following questions for staff and the development team:

- Is the staff concern the aesthetic, or changing a previously accepted norm and having to apply that to other signs across the City?
  - (M. Tucker) This is in UDD 2. This CDR only applies to this particular property. This one only allows channel letters on a raceway. It was something that was thoughtful.
  - (Secretary) From an aesthetic standpoint, the original approval was specific for consistency including sign types and mounting. This presents instead of a true raceway it has a backer panel effect which changes the overall dimensions of the sign and lighting, and takes away from the individual channel letter appearance, which is clean and elegant versus something that is more blocky or cabinet-type look and appearing.
- Does the applicant not want to pay for a new sign and reuse the sign they already have?
  - We feel that the proposed sign complies with the CDR. Of course they do not want to pay for another sign.
- The CDR says channel letters and a raceway and this is not it.
- (Secretary) We would be amending the CDR to allow for the alternative mounting.
- We're debating amending the CDR?

- (M. Tucker) It would be for any sign in the future. You could be really tight if you thought this was acceptable. You could say any sign that requires a backer has to come back to UDC.
- I think it's harder to get signage approved than a building. This CDR is clear, the process seems off. I don't think this sign fits into the existing CDR. By definition alone this sign doesn't fit in.
- (Tucker) This is not an interpretation of what is allowed in the CDR, it's an amendment to allow for a new sign type not otherwise allowed.
- Can the existing sign be modified to remove the letters from the backer and be installed on a raceway?
  - We certainly can but we will lose the blue backlighting.
- What is the consistency of color between the backer panel and the existing metal panel that's on the building?
  - It's the same brushed aluminum color.
- What does the public see as the difference between what is allowed and what's being asked for?
  - (Tucker) A sign that has more mass and bulk will be more visible as you drive by. Some people don't even notice it. The cleaner, less bulky option is going to be channel letters on a raceway versus something that has a backer that has a differentiation with the material it is mounted to. It will be more visible and bigger. Signs are designed to be seen too for identification.
- Why did we decide only one thing would be permitted?
  - (Tucker) It is what the Commission approved originally. The sign is of a better higher quality than otherwise would be permissible; that you have to do something better. That's a judgment.
  - (Secretary) When we talk about CDR's one of the criteria speaks to consistency and uniformity in design across the sign package, we look at sign type and application and a similar design aesthetic between signage. This is a departure from that. We will see a more sporadic design of signage on this building instead a more consistent design that we are seeing now. Because the original CDR was so specific this is definitely a departure from that.
- Can you elaborate on the illumination of the other signage?
  - They are translucent with opaque backs, all the lighting comes through the face. The faces are plexiglass.
- This CDR only allows for five on the front and two on the side? I don't think the sign meets the CDR; I don't think this is a bad sign either. I think the sign is of high quality, it just doesn't meet the channel letters on a raceway. What is the problem with amending this CDR to allow for this sign?
- (M. Tucker) We have to think about the future and how we administer this CDR in moving forward. You can amend the CDR to allow for a different sign type or do they want to allow just this sign as a deviation and require others to come back?
- Does staff have any issues with the ground sign? Would a motion need to make a finding on that?
- Can you speak to the depth of the existing signage and the proposed box of the new sign?
  - The Burndt CPA is 5" deep, the raceway itself is 3" deep. All the other letters are between 3-5" deep and the raceway is 6" deep, so the new sign is not as deep as the others. Driving by, you'd never notice the difference in overall depth.
- (M. Tucker) This one is face lit and shadow lit. The other ones are just face lit.

The Commission discussed the following:

- We need to make a finding if the sign, as requested, maintains visual harmony in addition to how specific we want to get in the motion on the design of this particular sign.
- This sign does maintain visual harmony. I don't want to open it up to say all future signs can be whatever they want. I would move we make an exception to allow this particular version, then all future signs need to come back for similar deliberations.
- (M. Tucker) Anything other than a sign on a raceway?
- Yes.

A motion was made by Asad, seconded by Harper, to grant Final Approval.

#### Discussion on the motion:

- Is your feeling we're making an exception for this sign only, but also the other signs on this building?
- The other signs are there and fit within the current CDR, this one doesn't. So we're just allowing this sign on a backer.
- I am just wondering if we open it up to allow the others signs to change, if they so desire also? Or do we have to word the motion such that it is just this sign, Burndt CP and any other signs need to come before us.
- Yes, it would be for this sign only. Anything else that does not meet the channel letters and a raceway would come back to the UDC.
- This becomes very different with shadow and face lighting. I would like to hear other opinions about adding a shadow lighting effect that is not on any other signs and we are trying to create visual harmony between signs.
- Though it's a nice sign and the lighting is a nice touch, I think there's nothing about this that's visually harmonious. I could get behind it if we defined what about this sign is OK to amend the CDR so that future applications of this CDR have some guidance. I'm not seeing what it is.
- Visual harmony doesn't mean everything has to look the same. It means that it fits within a composition on a façade. The blue and white to the right, if that glowed blue and white it's still channel letters. Maybe I am looking at it too simplistically. I think it works at this size and scale, it's not a fancy building anyway.

#### Action

On a motion by Asad, seconded by Harper, the Urban Design Commission **GRANTED FINAL APPROVAL**. The motion was passed on a vote of (4-2-1) with Asad, Harper, Klehr, and Rummel voting yes; Von Below and Knudson voting no; and the Chair non-voting.

The motion approved the proposed sign with the condition that all future signage not consisting of individual channel letters mounted on a raceway (as noted in the 2013 CDR) require review and approval by the Urban Design Commission.