

ZONING STAFF REPORT

July 14, 2021



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 301 Wisconsin Avenue
Project Name: Wisconsin Masonic Center
Application Type: Approval for a Signage Variance Request
Legistar File ID # [65945](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting approval for a Sign Variance. This property is an existing building located in the Urban Mixed Use (UMX) district, surrounded by a mixture of residential and office buildings, as well as two churches and MATC. The proposed electronic message center sign will replace the existing manual change of copy ground sign, which is taller and has a larger net area than what the code currently permits. This property is located at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue (4 lanes, 25mph) and East Johnson Street (3 lanes, 25 mph), which is a one way street heading northbound. The Landmarks Commission approve the ground sign on April 19, 2021.

Pursuant to Section 31.043(2), MGO, the UDC may approve a sign with up to fifty percent (50%) greater net area or fifty percent (50%) higher than the maximum height otherwise allowed, or reduce the required yard or setback if such approval:

- (a) Is necessary for a sign located on the site of an establishment to be identifiable and legible from the nearest roadway at prevailing speeds; and
- (b) Will result in a sign more in scale with the building and site and in a superior overall design.

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 64 sq. ft., with a maximum net area of 32 sq. ft. for a single sided sign, and a maximum height of 8' for monument style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting for a 9' tall, single sided monument ground sign that would have a total net area of 31.73 sq. ft.

Staff Comments: The previous ground sign was approved in 1991, and had an overall height of 11' and a total net area of 49 sq. ft. The proposed sign will have a code compliant total net area under 32 sq. ft., however they are requesting the overall height of 9', which is one foot taller than the code would allow. The location of the sign, which is in a landscape bed in front of the building, would not change. The proposed sign would be made of anodized aluminum metal that would match the color of the building masonry, and would feature acrylic push through lettering above the electronic message sign. The sign message cannot change more than once per hour, per Sec. 31.046(b).

The applicant provides views of the proposed sign viewed from Wisconsin Avenue and East Johnson Street, giving the impression that the additional foot for the sign would not appear too tall. Instead, the sign appears of appropriate height and scale with the building immediately behind it, and designed to match the material and look of the building. **Staff has no objection to the Variance request and recommends the UDC find the standards for Variance review have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Notes:

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- Sign Design Illustration page will correct note with Electronic message center dimensions to 3' x 8'.