

## ZONING STAFF REPORT

March 27, 2024



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 6514 Odana Road  
**Project Name:** Executive Investors of Madison LLC  
**Application Type:** Approval for a Signage Variance Request  
**Legistar File ID #** [82245](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Matt Tucker, Building Inspection Director

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The applicant is requesting approval for a Sign Variance. This property is an existing building located in Commercial Center (CC) district, containing a mixture of different uses. The site has an existing ground sign and is proposing a second ground sign, which would exceed the net area permitted by code. This property is located at the corner of Odana Road (2 lanes, 30 mph) and South Yellowstone Drive (2 lanes, 25 mph).

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 10' for monument style signs, based off the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes.

**Proposed Signage:** The applicant is requesting a 6' tall, internally illuminated, single-sided, monument styled multi-tenant ground sign that would have a total net area of 18 sq. ft. This sign is intended to serve tenant spaces that do not have an eligible area on a wall facing a street.

**Staff Comments:** Odana Road originally was four lanes at 30 mph, which allowed for up to two ground signs with a total net area 80 sq. ft. The existing two-sided ground sign was approved in 2007 with a total net area of 77.85 sq. ft. The property owner has indicated this existing ground sign is reserved for the "anchor tenant" and does not propose any changes for this sign. When Odana Road was restriped in 2021 to two lanes at 30 mph, the existing sign became nonconforming in size and prevents the property from having a second ground sign. While the street has reduced in the number of lanes, the right-of-way width has remained the same at 80 feet wide. The applicant is requesting a second ground sign with a single face, with a net area of 18 sq. ft. The cumulative total of ground signage (proposed new ground sign plus existing ground sign) would be 50% larger than what is permitted under current code, to provide street identification for tenant spaces located in the north side of the building, facing the parking lot, and are not eligible for wall signage facing South Yellowstone Drive or Odana Road.

As noted above, due to the arrangement of tenant spaces in the building, it is necessary for tenant spaces without walls facing streets to have some form of signage, and the ground sign is the only option. The proposed sign would satisfy signage needs for those tenants. The first standard appears to be satisfied.

For the second standard, the proposed sign does not appear generally superior in overall design. The sign is fairly basic, and a design more aligned with the intent of the variance standard could be proposed. This sign is a simple

box with two faces in the same plane separated by a divider channel, which if approved, could also display a single-tenant sign copy or multiple tenants' sign copy. However, this sign is limited in size due to the existing sign and the maximum variance that can be requested. The design itself does not assure the sign will be a multi-tenant sign into the future and with a variance, there is no assurance the sign can be required to remain multi-tenant. A design for a monument-style sign with clearly identified separate tenant panels would be an alternative design, which could meet the intent of standard #1 and be of a higher design per Standard #2. The Commission should discuss this design relative to standard #2, which staff believes is not met.

**Staff understand and agree that a multi-tenant ground sign is necessary for the identification needs of the back tenants of this development. However, staff has concerns about how the proposed sign meets Standard #2. Staff recommends the UDC find the standards for Variance review have not been met and refer this request, subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**