

## ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 17, 2024



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 7564 Cottage Grove Road  
**Project Name:** St. Matthews's New Life Church  
**Application Type:** Approval for a Sign Variance Request  
**Legistar File ID #** [82714](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting approval for a Sign Variance. This property is an existing Church located in a Planned Development (PD) zone district, with an allows signage equivalent to that of a Suburban Residential – Consistent 1 (SR-C1) district. The applicant is proposing to replace an existing ground sign with a total net area of 54.75 sq. ft. with a slightly smaller sign closer to the property line. This property fronts Cottage Grove Road, which is two lanes of traffic and 55 mph within an 133' wide right-of-way. The paved road is about 53' wide, and also includes bicycle and parking lanes.

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:** One wall and one ground sign per street frontage may be displayed; identifying the entity, with a maximum of two ground signs and two wall signs per zoning lot. Signs, whether displayed on a wall or the ground, shall not exceed 12 sq. ft. in net area, nor be closer than ten feet to any lot line, except such signs may be increased in net area by one square foot for each additional foot that the sign is set back more than 12 feet from the street lot line. **No sign under this section shall exceed 32 square feet in net area.** No sign shall project higher than one story, or 12 feet above the curb level, whichever is lower.

**Proposed Signage:** The applicant is requesting for an internally illuminated 8' tall, double sided, monument style ground sign that would have a total net area of 48 sq. ft., set back 49' from the property line, making the proposed sign 50% larger than what the code would allow.

**Staff Comments:** The sign ordinance allows for a church in a residentially zoned district to have a ground sign with a maximum net area of 32 sq. ft. if the sign is placed 32' away from the property line. The existing sign, which was approved as part of the PD is no longer permitted by code. This sign is also installed about 100' away from the property line making it difficult to see and read from the street.

The applicant is proposing to take down the existing ground sign and install a new sign 49' away from the property line. The sign would have a net area of 24 sq. ft. per side, making the total net area 48 sq. ft., which is 6.75 sq. ft. smaller than the existing sign. The applicant provides pictures of the existing sign from various points of view along road, which shows the limited visibility of the sign from the street. There is also a comparison of the proposed sign and a code compliant sign from the same vantage points, and while there doesn't seem to be

a larger difference between the two, the larger sign would provide better visibility for the church and fits better with the landscaping bed. **Staff has no objection to the variance request for the ground sign and recommends the UDC find the standards for variance review have been met.**