

AGENDA # 2

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION	PRESENTED: July 20, 2011	
TITLE: 1501 Monroe Street – Comprehensive Design Review of Signage for “Hotel Red.” 13 th Ald. Dist. (02999)	REFERRED:	
	REREFERRED:	
	REPORTED BACK:	
AUTHOR: Alan J. Martin, Secretary	ADOPTED:	POF:
DATED: July 20, 2011	ID NUMBER:	

Members present were: Richard Wagner, Mark Smith, Henry Lufler, John Harrington, Dawn O’Kroley, Richard Slayton, Todd Barnett, and Ald. Marsha Rummel.

SUMMARY:

At its meeting of July 20, 2011, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of a Comprehensive Design Review located at 1501 Monroe Street. Appearing on behalf of the project was Bob Seeger with Seeger Architects and Mike Erickson and Scott Bertrand with Jones’ Signs. Appearing and speaking in support of the project was Jon Standridge, representing the Vilas Neighborhood Association.

Bob Seeger with Seeger Architects and we have the owner of Hotel Red with us Mike Erickson and Scott Bertrand with Jones’ Signs. Seeger noted that we’re here today because of a fine point in the definition of a wall of the building and we have 5 signs in front of you. All of our signs are 1/2 - 1/3 square foot requirements. They have all the quality materials that meet the code. Their locations are well within the code. It’s a very subtle sign package that has high quality done graphics and materials and we doctor the materials as we go. So, the reason we’re here is because the definition of a projecting sign says that it comes off the wall of a building. Basically, if you go into the further definition of a projecting sign it talks about the location of a projecting sign. It says it can be on the façade of a building or on the corner of a building. So, going back to the definition, it says, “it’s got to be on a wall of a building.” So, there was a bit of indecision by staff as to whether or not our location for our projection sign was indeed on the wall of this building or at the corner of the building. So, because of the articulation of the façade of this, and the ins and outs, they couldn’t make a determination if this represented the wall of the building and whether this wall of a building could then have a projecting sign, which our projecting sign is a little less than a 1/3 of the square footage it can be and it meets the exact distance that it can project over the property line, so we’re within all the guidelines of what this projection sign has to be in size and obviously the critical part is of course projecting out, we’re not just sticking this thing out in the street. So, with the indecision as to whether or not we’re putting it on a wall of a building or locating it on the corner of the building, they said, “let’s just go to Urban Design to talk about it.” One thing to mention also is when we asked when there was this indecision, we asked for the staff to provide us with the definition of the wall, which they were unable to produce at that time. There are a lot of definitions; none of them actually defined what a wall was, so we were having a hard time understanding.

Staff noted that it is pretty simple. For instance, a wall sign has to fit within a signable area on the building, it should not go beyond the signable area as defined by ordinance in Chapter 31, Madison General Ordinances.

The definition of a wall sign was read for the record. Staff noted that if it were a wall sign, a wall sign fits distinctly within the signable area. The signable area of that building would be the inches wide of that particular column, that's it; it may go vertically, basically cover the length of that column in height, but if it's a wall sign: that's how big your sign would be. Staff read the definition of a projecting sign as found in Chapter 31, Madison General Ordinances for the record. Staff noted that a projecting sign itself, projects perpendicularly at least 15 inches or more from the building face as mounted to the wall. The sign in question is a hybrid, it's neither a wall sign nor a projecting sign as defined by ordinance, thus requiring consideration under the provision for "comprehensive design review."

Seeger noted and presented details of all the other signs that meet all the criteria; they include the ground sign, entrance sign and in your packet it's the one mounted on the planter, the planter is located at the corner of Regent and Monroe.

Bertrand provided details on the construction and materials of all proposed signage noting that all signs that are in this package are all LED illumination.

The sign in question with comprehensive design review is our projection sign. Obviously if it's projecting out over the property line the code allowed 24 inches we have a back to it, so our request was that and again within the code describing where the entrance to the hotel would be. So the back of the sign we basically have an entrance with an arrow so that as you're coming down Monroe St. here, being this is our main drop-off and all of our vehicular access to the hotel anybody in this area will be wondering "Where might this entrance be?", so that will help direct them into the entrance. Obviously our projection sign as you're coming up Regent St. will direct people to come into our canopied entrance. So, this sign involves a two-face deal, I guess we had talked about in terms of trying to, it will be up here and it will say entrance in a very subtle way, not lit, so as you're approaching the building from anywhere on this corner, seeing the Plaza entrance and wondering "what do I do with my car?", where is the main entrance, we have this very discreet little entrance sign at the back of our 24 inch projection sign. I guess there are a few things we know are part of your criteria and we didn't deteriorate from signs in the neighborhood, typical signs are wall signs. Bertrand spoke about the signs being similar to what the University has. If you were to look down Breese St. at Camp Randall, you would see the flag signs going off of their signs there. Staff noted that the University is not subject to our ordinance. Seeger remarked that they were not talking about what they've done for graphics and size; we're talking about how their signage is very consistent with the quality of our signage which is one of the criteria as to are we adding to the neighborhood in terms of the same type quality. Bertrand remarked that the sign area is the same type quality Jones' Signs actually fabricated and did the signs for Camp Randall as well, so they are going to go with the neighborhood with Camp Randall.

John Standridge spoke as President of the Vilas Neighborhood Association. He remarked that the Commission probably knew that this project has been contentious with the Neighborhood Association over the years pretty delighted with the new owner, represented by Mike Erickson, having bought the property and we're happy with the fact that they're talking to us, they're talking to us a lot and they're giving us all the information we think we need and they're answering questions. They're holding meetings, they're giving tours – the neighborhood is almost uniformly excited about the hotel opening and they did present what this signage thing was, I took a good look of the photos of the PDF that the City had on file and there's been a little chatter on our Listserv, we haven't had a meeting to support it or not support it, but generally, speaking as President and knowing that there wasn't a vote and representing the chatter from our Listserv, there's no problems with any of the signage that they're proposing tonight.

Comments by the Commission were as follows:

- The signage design and quality of the signs is really nice. It ties together nicely with the building and has a very clean, crisp feeling, is very nice. The main issue is with the wall/projecting sign; it's placed quite high. If I'm a driver approaching from the west, and you know you have the directional entry thing, I don't think it's serving its purpose, I don't think it's going to make it clear for people to enter. If I'm coming down the hill from Monroe, or from the west and the only way that I understand the parking lot's right beyond the building is the sign 3 stories up, I don't think it's going to serve your purpose.
- I agree with you, at nighttime no one will see it.
- The other face is really just signage for the hotel and hotel identification. That one, architecturally, it seems as well, is too high on the building, that it doesn't relate to your canopy and your entry.
- The wall/projecting sign doesn't feel comfortable in that location. Could it just be a simple, the sign that's mounted to the face of the building, so if it were a projecting sign pushed back where the balcony meets the face of the building, it's still visible from Regent, but on a stronger architectural element and mounted to the Regent St. façade, as opposed to alley façade? That could be more successful.
- I agree that the graphics, the design of the sign as an object and the materials were perfectly fine, but I think that placement aside from the directional signage and the accessible parking signage, the two other signs, the one at the corner of the building and the one on the pier, over here, I think just missed the mark. The building was put together very thoughtfully on detailing and proportions and it just seems to me that both of those signs were just taken from a kit and then just placed on the building.
- Take a look at the "Depot" building signage on West Washington Avenue; it's mounted with brackets, it floats from the building, and this one is basically tacked on to the face and it just seems as if the signage aspect of the project wasn't integrated with the building architecture and now you're just trying to recover; so, this just looks tacked on. It's actually too small, the proportion of the sign doesn't seem to make sense with the architecture which is verticals and horizontals, and this is square, maybe there's a way of designing the sign in a vertical format, including where it's placed, maybe it's here, I do think it's too tall, too high off the ground. Look at the Ocean Grill signage, which is very tasteful, it works with the architecture, it's a sign that is suspended from the canopy, It is something really elegant that fits the architecture here. Consider doing something that's, why right at the corner, why not here that helps these guys out sooner than before they hit corner.
- Relative to the planter sign, question why there's a sign in the planter, on the planter; it seems to defeat the purpose of the planter, either from one side or the other. That's a nice feature that you developed and now it's going to be obscured.
- There should be some integration for that signage. The design, the graphics are great, I just think how they're attached to the building, your building is quite nice, and then it needs to fit the building.
- Maybe a more comprehensive package with actual projecting sign at that point there too, as opposed to something that's screwed to the base of the column.
- I have never looked up in the air as high as this sign is currently proposed and there's a number one reason why: that intersection is one of the most dangerous in the entire city, if it's not number one. You've got so much going on right at the grade; you don't have time to be looking around. That's just the way it is. There is another sign if you look down that side of the street for Open Pantry, it's a monument sign. I don't know how many people look at that sign, again, because that intersection is quite busy. Same kind of methodology and it's only probably 10 feet off the ground, and it's kind of large. Now, listening to your logic and why you have that sign there, what it's trying to do, it simply can't function the way you want it to. It has a purpose, but it's not going to do the job you want it to do. You also have some other factors where you're

going to have a lot of first-time users, likely to have a GPS or they've got little iPad/iPhone – probably need some kind of identifier to make the turn for hotel red. That could happen much lower, on property wall, or first floor or back against this piece of the building or on inside face or even tied into your canopy piece which is fairly well pronounced. The point is you've got to find a way to get this sign to function the way you want it to. Your graphics the other signs are wonderful, fit in with your building in a great way, but this one at corner is big problem this evening. Doesn't do what you need it to do.

- It seems to me that while this is an elegant design, your square sign, it doesn't work when you just start popping everywhere that you need to think of the areas where you're putting this sign. Think of a design for that area, rather than cookie-cutter thing and put it wherever you want.
- On that corner, square shape doesn't work with architecture.
- Think how it's attached is really important (wall/projecting sign), that tacking it on the face of the column, for one part of the face be fully visible and the other face to be invisible... you're going to attach it with a couple of anchors, right? It's just tacked on? It just seems like you want to have some kind of bracket or t-section or something that holds it on the building.
- Don't think this sign fits on that column, I think it's a strong architectural sign element and I guess I'm not persuaded that even oblong or however wouldn't work. And what strikes me is the monument sign, if you look at that again, taller, more prominent – “Parking ahead” – I would want to know where to park and how do I get there?
- Concern with the visibility of the ground sign within the planter as well as survivability of annuals proposed in the planter.
- Staff noted that unless they come back or are required to come back because any portion of the revised sign package doesn't meet code requirements they won't be back because of compliancy with the Sign Control Ordinance

Seeger noted that they would not be back with the wall/projecting sign because it will either be modified to meet the code or it will not be put up.

ACTION:

On a motion by Barnett, seconded by Smith, the Urban Design Commission **REFERRED** consideration of this item. The motion was passed on a vote of (7-0). The motion to REFER the signage package required that the applicant study the height of the wall/projecting sign relative to visibility to safety, study how all the signs are attached to the building to be better integrated with the building's architecture and to look into signage that's attached to canopy, like Ocean Grill at the rear and Monroe Street elevations.

After the Commission acts on an application, individual Commissioners rate the overall design on a scale of 1 to 10, including any changes required by the Commission. The ratings are for information only. They are not used to decide whether the project should be approved. The scale is 1 = complete failure; 2 = critically bad; 3 = very poor; 4 = poor; 5 = fair; 6 = good; 7 = very good; 8 = excellent; 9 = superior; and 10 = outstanding. The overall ratings for this project are 3, 3, 3 and 5.

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION PROJECT RATING FOR: 1501 Monroe Street

	Site Plan	Architecture	Landscape Plan	Site Amenities, Lighting, Etc.	Signs	Circulation (Pedestrian, Vehicular)	Urban Context	Overall Rating
Member Ratings	-	-	-	-	5	-	5	5
	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3
	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	3

General Comments:

- Sign at corner of building on Regent is an example of utter failure. More conduit?
- Sign placement and scale miss the mark!
- No projecting sign on column; look at other options. Look at more functional location for monument sign than in planter. Better integration with architecture.
- Signs are not integrated with the architecture.
- Poor signage package integration with the building.