

# ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

December 11, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 1802 & 1902 Wright Street  
**Project Name:** McAllen Truax Business Park  
**Application Type:** Approval for an Alteration to an Approved Comprehensive Design Plan  
**Legistar File ID #** [58347](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

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The applicant is requesting an amendment to a previously approved Comprehensive Design Review. The original CDR was approved November 15, 2000, which allowed 1802 Wright Street two double-faced internally illuminated monument signs to identify the tenants in each of the two buildings. Part of this approval limited tenants' wall signage to small inconspicuous I.D. signs on or over the entry doors of each tenant space. The property owners would like to amend the approval to allow for larger wall signage and projecting signs. This CDR is also expanding to cover 1902 Wright Street, which was built in 2002. This zoning lot is located in the Industrial Limited (IL) district, and abuts Wright Street (4 lanes, 25 mph), Hoffman Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), and Kinsman Boulevard (4 lanes, 25 mph).

Pursuant to Section 31.43(4)(d), MGO, any changes to the approved plan must first be approved by the UDC using the full Comprehensive Design Review (CDR) process under Sec. 31.043(4)(a):

1. *The Sign Plan shall create visual harmony between the signs, building(s), and building site through unique and exceptional use of materials, design, color, any lighting, and other design elements; and shall result in signs of appropriate scale and character to the uses and building(s) on the zoning lot as well as adjacent buildings, structures and uses.*
2. *Each element of the Sign Plan shall be found to be necessary due to unique or unusual design aspects in the architecture or limitations in the building site or surrounding environment; except that when a request for an Additional Sign Code Approval under Sec. 31.043(3) is included in the Comprehensive Design Review, the sign(s) eligible for approval under Sec. 31.043(3) shall meet the applicable criteria of Sec. 31.043(3), except that sign approvals that come to Comprehensive Design Review from MXC and EC districts pursuant to 31.13(3) and (7) need not meet the criteria of this paragraph.*
3. *The Sign Plan shall not violate any of the stated purposes described in Sec. 31.02(1) and 33.24(2).*
4. *All signs must meet minimum construction requirements under Sec. 31.04(5).*
5. *The Sign Plan shall not approve Advertising beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.11 or Off-Premise Directional Signs beyond the restrictions in Sec. 31.115.*
6. *The Sign Plan shall not be approved if any element of the plan:*
  - a. *presents a hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic on public or private property,*
  - b. *obstructs views at points of ingress and egress of adjoining properties,*
  - c. *obstructs or impedes the visibility of existing lawful signs on adjacent property, or*
  - d. *negatively impacts the visual quality of public or private open space.*
7. *The Sign Plan may only encompass signs on private property of the zoning lot or building site in question, and shall not approve any signs in the right of way or on public property.*

Wall Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.07, there shall be one signable area for each façade facing a street or parking lot 33 feet in width or greater. For a tenant space with less than twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet in floor area, the maximum net area of wall signs shall be forty percent (40%) of the signable area, or two feet per lineal foot of tenant frontage, not to exceed 100% of the signable area. In no case shall a wall sign exceed eighty (80) square feet in net area. For a tenant space with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area in a multi-tenant building, the maximum net area of all wall signs shall be thirty percent (30%) of the signable area. In no case shall a wall sign exceed one hundred twenty (120) square feet in net area.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting each tenant be allowed a wall sign up to 60 sq. ft., where the previously approved CDR limited wall signage to small identification signs on or over the entry doors of each tenant space. The proposed wall signs would consist of individual letters (dimensional or non-dimensional) either mounted directly to the fascia or to a backer panel that is painted to match the building fascia on which it will be installed.

Staff Comments: This site is a through lot, with traffic primarily coming from Wright Street. Wall signage will be visible from a double-loaded parking lot, where traffic moves slowly through the site. Because of this condition, large wall signs are not necessary to identify the businesses. This zoning lot was developed initially to support flex industrial type uses, with most only needing parking for employees, typically with few visits from customers. However, some of the current uses inside the buildings have numerous customers visiting the site each day. Without wall signage for these tenants, customers would have a more difficult time finding these tenant spaces.

The original CDR was approved allowing for two oversized multi-tenant ground signs near entrances on Wright Street. Each sign was approved to have a net area of 50 sq. ft. per side, therefore having a cumulative total of 200 sq. ft.), whereas the code currently allows for this zoning lot to have two signs with a cumulative net area of 80 sq. ft. While the 9/15/2000 UDC staff report does not state the reasoning for the CDR barring typical wall signage, staff surmise that the large ground signage was determined to be sufficient in providing business identification. However, these buildings are very long and face the parking lot instead of the street; and as stated above, more visitors are coming to the site.

The applicant proposes each tenant space be allowed a wall sign with a maximum net of 60 sq. ft. The application includes graphic examples of wall signage having a net area of 80 sq. ft. and 40 sq. ft. for comparison. These examples are speculative at best, as each tenant space varies in width, with some being smaller than shown and some spaces having more architectural detail than others. The square footage of the example signs are also rectangular shaped, but dimensions aren't shown, making it difficult for staff to confirm these sizes are accurate. Commissioners should also be aware that signs are rarely designed to be simple rectangles, and instead can take up various shapes, with the sign code allowing the maximum net be calculated using up to three boxes covering the sign copy. The submitted graphics only narrowly shows what one type of sign could look like in one signable area. The applicant is also requesting each tenant be allowed to have a projecting sign up to 12 sq. ft. in size, which would be much more effective in providing identification for tenant spaces on the long building than having a larger wall sign. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request for each tenant having a wall sign; however, staff feels a smaller net area would be more in spirit with the previously approved CDR and align with the standards of approval for a CDR. Staff recommends the UDC consider allowing a 32 sq. ft. maximum net area or smaller, as established by the UDC.**

Projecting Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.09, occupants may display a total of one projecting sign on a façade facing a street or on a corner of a building, and can be displayed in addition to any wall sign. This zoning lot is allowed a projecting sign 32 sq. ft. per side for the elevation facing Wright Street and

20 sq. ft. per side for projecting signs facing Hoffman and Kinsman. Also, if a ground and projecting signs are displayed on the same a zoning lot, only one (1) of such signs, where permitted may exceed twelve (12) square feet in net area.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting each tenant be allowed a projecting sign of 12 sq. ft. which is allowable per code; however some tenants do not have street frontage and therefore not eligible for a projecting signs.

Staff Comments: CDR approval is needed for the projecting signs since they face a parking lot instead of the street. As noted above, the buildings on the zoning lot are very long, face the parking lot instead of the street, and some uses inside the buildings have numerous customers visiting the site each day. Having a projecting sign for each tenant on these long buildings would provide more effective business identification to visitors on the site than having a larger wall sign. The proposed size of each tenant having a maximum net of 12 sq. ft. per side complies with the sign ordinance. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Notes:

- The wall signs design requirements include allowance for logos.
- CDR text shall be revised as follows:
  - Reference all signs not requiring permits shall comply with Chapter 31.
  - Design requirements should be revised to delete references to current code sizes and only indicate wall signage sizes as allowed per this CDR.
  - Wall sign design requirement No. 3 and projecting sign design requirement No. 2 are redundant to Chapter 31, and should be eliminated.
- The parking lot directional sign shown in the CDR packet is not part of this amendment and does not comply with code. The sign will be removed from the CDR packet and a code compliant size will be installed in its place.
- Approval of amended CDR does not permit any signage shown in CDR currently without a permit. Signs will have to obtain a sign permit for signage conforming to CDR requirements.