



**Project Address:** 102 E Rusk Avenue

**Application Type:** Signage Exception to allow the Use of a Wall Sign on a Building Façade not Adjacent to Off-Street Parking Area  
**UDC is an Approving Body**

**Legistar File ID #:** [88015](#)

**Prepared By:** Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

## Background Information

**Applicant | Contact:** Chase Singleton, Jones Sign Co., Inc. | Rusk Avenue Hotel Group, LLC

**Project Description:** The applicant is proposing the installation of a wall sign on a wall that is not directly adjacent to a parking lot or street, on the north elevation.

**Approval Standards:** The UDC is an **approving body** on this request. The Sign Control Ordinance, [MGO Sec. 31.043\(3\)\(d\)](#) states that: *"After a public hearing as provided in Sec. 33.24(4)(e)3(d), the Urban Design Commission (UDC) may permit the use of wall signs on building façades not adjacent to off-street parking areas where, due to a variation of building setbacks, a signable area exists, provided the area of the sign shall not exceed the area of the wall sign permitted on the front of the building."*

## Summary of Design Considerations

**Project Site Location.** The project site is located along Rimrock Road in close proximity to the Beltline Highway/Rimrock Road interchange, adjacent to the Alliant Energy Center. Generally, the character of the area is predominantly mixed-use commercial.

Formerly a Clarion Suites, the existing hotel is being converted to a Spark by Hilton hotel. In addition to new signage, minor facade improvements, as well as site improvements, including curb and gutter, landscape and lighting are also proposed as part of the conversion. These other improvements have been reviewed and approved administratively as part of a Minor Alteration to a Previously Approved Conditional Use.

**Existing Signage.** As an existing hotel, there are several existing signs, including those on the:

- North Elevation, currently there is no signage on this elevation.
- East Elevation, a cabinet sign above the roof facing Rimrock Road. This sign will be removed.
- East Elevation, a cabinet sign at the first floor facing Rimrock Road. As part of the hotel conversion this sign will be replaced with a new sign, compliant with the Sign Code.
- South Elevation, a cabinet sign at the eighth floor facing a parking lot. As part of the hotel conversion this sign will be replaced with a new sign, compliant with the Sign Code.
- Ground Signage, one monument-style sign located at the corner of Rusk Avenue and Rimrock Road. This is also considered a change of copy sign, compliant with the Sign Code.
- Parking Lot Directional Signage, one "Enter" ground sign located at the Rusk Avenue site entrance, for which only the sign face will be replaced. This is considered a change of copy sign and will be compliant with the Sign Code.
- West Elevation, currently there is no signage on this elevation.

**Summary of Sign Code Requirements and Proposed Signage.** The applicant is requesting a wall sign on the north elevation of the building. Since the north elevation is not adjacent to an off-street parking area associated with the development and is not a street-facing elevation, it is not a qualifying elevation for signage. As noted above, the UDC may grant an exception to this requirement provided that the proposed sign does not exceed the area of a wall sign permitted on the front of the building. In this case, the code allows for a 120 square-foot wall sign on the Rimrock Road-facing elevation. In addition, the proposed sign is not allowed to be larger than 30 percent of the identifiable signable area on the non-qualifying facade (120 square feet). At 100.49 square feet, the proposed sign is smaller than what the code would allow.

The proposed wall sign is comprised of individual channel letters, mounted to a backer panel with face-lit illumination.

**Summary of Staff Analysis.** A signage exception is required because the proposed sign is located on a non-qualifying elevation, not facing a street or parking area associated with the building. Staff notes that as part of the UDC's evaluation of whether a sign should be permitted on a non-qualifying elevation, similar to other signage requests, the proposed location of the signage high on the building, site context, overall design aesthetic of the proposed sign, and justification for the request related to visibility and business identification, etc. Are all part of the Commission's considerations.

Based on the information presented in the application materials related to the design aesthetic, illumination, and justification related to visibility and business identification, staff is supportive of this request. Staff requests the UDC review the proposed sign and make findings based on the following:

- The proposed wall sign is consistent with the code limitations regarding size,
- The sign is placed in a similar location to other signage on the building, at the eighth floor,
- There is currently no signage on the north elevation or north side of the site identifying the site for those approaching from John Nolen Drive, which is a secondary entrance to the site. The placement of the sign on a non-qualifying elevation, high on the building, seems necessary and results in a higher level of visibility and business identification than another location on a qualifying elevation,
- Generally, the proposed sign is of a quality design aesthetic, including individual channel letters mounted to a backer panel, and with face-lit illumination.