



ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

November 7, 2018

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 1 Exact Lane
Project Name: Exact Sciences Discovery Campus
Application Type: Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval
Legistar File ID # [53536](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL Approval for signage at this new establishment, which consists of three large buildings, and will house the Laboratory for Exact Sciences, as well as IT and Administrative offices. This property sits South of the Beltline (4 lanes, 55 mph), West of Forward Drive (2 Lanes, 25 mph), North of Schroeder Road (2 lanes, 35 mph), and East of Rayovac Drive (2 lanes, 25 mph). The CDR request consists of 11 ground signs (one of which is oversized), 2 wall signs, and two oversized parking lot directional signs. This property is also located in Urban Design District 2, which the Applicant is for exception to some of the criteria as well.

Pursuant to Section 31.043(4)(b), MGO, the UDC shall apply the following criteria upon review of an application for a Comprehensive Sign Plan:

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.*

Section 33.24(9)(d)4., [Signage Criteria for Urban Design District No. 2](#), indicates the Urban Design Commission shall consider in each case those of the following guidelines and requirements as may be appropriate to signage:

a. Guidelines.

- i. Signs should identify the activity without imposing upon the view of residents, businesses, or activities of the district.
- ii. Signs should be appropriate to the type of activity and clientele at which its message is aimed.
- iii. Signs should be designed so as to be legible to the intended viewer in relation to the surrounding circumstances.
- iv. Signs should avoid covering or impinging upon landscape features or significant structures.

b. Requirements.

- i. Signs, if located on or adjacent to buildings, shall be integrated with the architectural design of the buildings.
- ii. Signs shall be located and designed only to inform the intended clientele.
- iii. Signs shall be used only as identification of the establishment and shall have no more than a total of eight (8) symbols and/or words.
- iv. No portion of an illuminated sign shall have a luminance greater than two hundred (200) foot lamberts for any portion of the sign within a circle two (2) feet in diameter. No sign or part of any sign shall change its level of illumination more than once every one (1) hour. (Am. by ORD-09-00091, 8-1-09)
- v. Electronic changeable copy signs, if permitted in the District, shall comply with [31.046\(1\)](#) which requires that electronic changeable copy signs in Urban Design Districts shall not alternate, change, fade in, fade out, or otherwise change more frequently than once every one (1) hour. (Am. by ORD-09-00091, 8-1-09)
- vi. A minimum setback of five (5) feet is required of all detached signs. A minimum setback of ten (10) feet from the public right-of-way is required for signs exceeding ten (10) square feet in net area and fifteen (15) feet in height. A minimum setback of twenty (20) feet is required for all signs exceeding twenty (20) square feet in net area or twenty (20) feet in height. No detached sign shall exceed seventy-five (75) square feet in net area and twenty-five (25) feet in height. Based upon the following criteria the Urban Design Commission may specifically approve a larger sign or reduce the setbacks above:
 - A. An exception from the size and setback limitation 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. An exception from the size and setback limitation will result in a sign more in scale with the building and site and will result in a superior overall design. (Am. by Ord. 9593, 10-14-88)
- vii. No detached sign shall occupy the space between two (2) feet and ten (10) feet above grade within fifteen (15) feet of the public right-of-way except for its support, which shall not exceed a total cross-section area of one (1) square foot.
- viii. The net area of an attached sign of any occupancy on any facade shall not exceed forty (40) square feet.
- ix. All signs and their words shall be mounted parallel to the building surface to which they are attached. No sign or words shall project more than eighteen (18) inches from the surface to which they are attached. Attached signs shall not be mounted on roofs and shall not project above roofs.

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 single occupancy, stand-alone, non-residential building with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area, **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 approval for two wall signs, both similar in style. The first wall sign faces the North, toward the Beltline. The dimensions of the signable area on this façade were not provide, but the sign appears to cover more than 30%. As for the sign, the applicant states that the sign will be just over 40 sq. ft., using one box to calculate net area. These are attractively designed signs and generally match the architecture of the broader campus.

The other sign faces the East, toward Forward Drive. This sign is also missing dimensions for the signable area, and the net area of the sign is calculated using one box, totaling to 55.58 sq. ft. This sign also appears to cover more than 30% of the signable area.

Staff Comments: The facades on the buildings are highly articulated, providing signable areas of limited size. The two proposed areas were designed for placement of wall signage. To design a larger signable area for a reasonably sized and code-complaint sign would negatively affect the highly articulated façade. To place a code complaint wall sign in the proposed signable area would result in a small, illegible sign, and would not be of appropriate scale in comparison to the rest of the building. With three large buildings on the site, the proposed wall signs identify the lab facility and administrative building that the employees will occupy and provide necessary identification and direction to visitors.

The applicant does state that they would also need exception from UDD No. 2 requirement 8, which has a size limit of 40 sq. ft. However, the net area for both signs were calculated using only one box, and it appears they can recalculate the total net area to a smaller calculation, if using three boxes as the code allows. Regardless of the actual calculations, this wall signage appears appropriate as proposed.

Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met, with the condition that all other wall signage shall comply with MGO 31 and UDD #2 signage regulations.

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 160 sq. ft., and a maximum height of 12' for monument style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes (in this case, four). The ordinance also allows for lots with frontage 500' or more, as well as a vehicle entrance on that frontage, to have an additional monument-style ground sign, no larger than eight feet in height, with 32 sq. ft. per side, located at each vehicle entrance.

Proposed Ground Signage: The applicant is proposing 11 ground signs, one of which is over the maximum allowed size. The design for most of the ground signs includes similar sign copy with an internally-illuminated light blue feature, upon a masonry base. These are attractively designed monument-style signs and generally match the architecture of the broader campus.

The largest ground signs in this request is proposed to be located where the current Exact Sciences monument-style ground sign is located, along the eastbound lanes of the W. Beltline Highway. This sign is the primary sign by which the campus will be identified form the Beltline, due to the relatively smaller size for the wall sign on the building (sign type F). The applicant is proposing to construct a new sign, which is 200 sq. ft.± of net area per side. This sign appears to be similar in size with the existing sign, which is nonconforming and significantly larger than code would allow for this or any other property in this section of the Beltline Highway corridor. The maximum size

for a ground sign at this location is 80 sq. ft. per side with a combined total of 160 sq. ft. for all sides. The proposed sign is lower in height than that allowed, limiting its visibility per the requested design.

The three proposed directional monument signs would direct traffic to the campus from the south. Two are located at the intersections along Schroeder Road, which is expected to contain the majority of traffic heading to the campus, with one additional sign located at the driveway entrance along Rayovac Drive, for any traffic coming from Watts Road. These signs are of a compliant height (8') and size (slightly over 24 sq. ft. of net area per side).

There are two vehicular directional signs the applicant proposes, which directs vehicles where to park, and where shipping docks are located for large delivery trucks coming to the site. One of these signs is located along Rayovac Drive, near the loading area, and the other is located further in the lot, along the private drive. These two signs are of a compliant height (8') and smaller in size compared to the large directional monument signs (19.4 sq. ft. per side).

The remaining four ground signs are the small vehicular directional signs, larger than 3 sq. ft. per side, exceeding maximum size for parking lot directional signs as allowed in the sign ordinance. These signs are located strategically through the site, with three located at each driveway entrance along Forward Drive, and one located deep in the property by the Northwest parking lot. These signs are designed to be 6.5' in height and 10.67 sq. ft. of net area per side.

The site plan does not clearly identify the setback from the property lines for these signs, so it cannot be confirmed whether these signs will meet the UDD No. 2 requirements 6 and 7, however it does appear that the signs will be closer than 15' from the property lines. The setback requirement applies to any ground sign that fronts a public street.

Another proposed ground sign is proposed to be placed in the center of campus, near the administration and amenities building. This ground sign identifies the campus, as Exact Sciences refers to this site as the "Discovery Campus". This sign would be a little over 30 sq. ft. in size, and just under 5' in height. This sign is intended to welcome people to the facility and create a sense of place or campus environment.

Staff Comments: The applicant argues that the proposed height and size of the ground sign near the Beltline Highway is for visibility for along the highway and best accommodates the horizontal format of the Exact Sciences logo, yet does not provide any code compliant illustrations of the ground sign for comparison, to supporting the request. The applicant also wishes to re-use the base, which is not relevant to the standards of approval for CDR (Note: re-using the base is acceptable). The applicant provides visibility as the primary argument for the size exception, however, it does not appear that information has been presented to make this case. The placement of any reasonably-sized sign at this location is highly visible. Also, this sign is under the maximum height for a ground sign as allowed by code. It would be expected that an applicant would use the maximum height allowed, combined with a potential size exception, to make a logical argument for a more visible sign. Staff notes that a pole-style sign, which could be up to 22' in height, would not be appropriate, and the monument-style sign is the appropriate sign design for a place of business such as this. Generally, Staff is concerned over precedence this may set for other future establishments that may develop along the Beltline and how this signage exception can be found to meet the standards of approval for CDR exception. While it is understandable that a complaint, 80 sq. ft. per side, ground sign may be difficult to view at 55 mph and 6 lanes, a ground sign that would be 50% larger than what the code allows might be more appropriate, similar to what a signage variance could allow. A clear finding relative to the standards of approval for a CDR exceptions should be made by the UDC should any exception to size be approved.

As noted above, the Discovery Campus ground sign creates a sense of place for the campus and is intended for employees to use as a gather space for meetings breaks. The sign itself is of a compliant size (slightly over 30 sq. ft.) and height (4' 11"), and overall, is an attractively designed sign that fits well into its environment.

For the remaining ground signs, they are essential for directing employees, visitors, and delivery trucks coming to the site, as it is expected that employees will be accessing the site in various work shifts, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. These ground signs are of a compliant height and size individually, but as the sign ordinance only allows for two ground sign on the lot, and the directional signs would not otherwise comply with our allowance for 3 sq. ft. for a directional sign, a CDR is required.

Staff recommends UDC find the CDR standards are not met and refer the request for the main ground sign near the beltline. Staff believes further information should be provided by the applicant relative to the criteria of approval for a CDR to support the approval of a sign larger than what the code would allow. For the remaining ground signs, Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met, however more information should be provided regarding the specific location of the signs, to determine if all or only some of the ground signs need exception from UDD No. 2 requirements.

Parking Lot Signage Permitted per Sign Ordinance: Summarizing Section 31.03(2) and 31.044(1)(I), parking lot directional signage are necessary for safety or prompting traffic flow to a location on the premises on which the sign is located. These signs can be a maximum size of 3 sq. ft. with a maximum height of 10 ft., and two signs per street frontage. These types of signs are exempt from permits.

Parking lot regulation signs, on the other hand, designate the condition of use or identity of such parking areas. These signs can be a maximum of 9 sq. ft. and require a 10 ft. setback from the property line.

Proposed Signage: The applicant is requesting two 12 sq. ft. parking lot directional signage located above the garage openings on the south side of the structure. Vehicles can arrive at this location through three separate driveways off Forward Drive. These are attractively designed signs and generally match the architecture of the broader campus.

Staff Comments: The oversized parking garage directional point out to employees and visitors how to safely enter and exit the structure, who can arrive at this point from three different driveway points off of Forward Drive. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Staff Comments regarding other signage

- It should be noted in the final CDR "Future signage submittals not specifically addressed by this document shall comply with the standards of Chapter 31."
- Dimensions of the signable area will need to be provided in the final CDR.
- Dimensions of the calculating the net using the three box method for the wall signs will need to be provided in the final CDR.
- Setbacks for each ground sign on the site plan, to clarify which signs are granted exception from UDD setback requirements.