



ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

February 9, 2022

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 5710 - 5910 Mineral Point Road
Project Name: CMFG Life
Application Type: Approval for Comprehensive Design Review of Signage
Legistar File ID # [69216](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review of signage for an existing office campus, which is currently wrapping up construction of a five story/90' tall building housing various amenities for the businesses in the other two buildings on-site. This lot is zoned SE and is adjacent to Mineral Point Road (6 lanes, 40 mph) and South Rosa Road (2 Lanes, 30 mph). The CDR request consists of five ground signs, two wall signs, and two oversized parking lot directional signs, along with 10 existing directional ground signs and three wall signs on the other two buildings.

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.*

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This zoning lot is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 144 sq. ft., and a maximum height of 11' for monument style signs, based off of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes. 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 two 8.75' tall monument styled ground signs, each with a total net of 74 sq. ft. per side (identifiers 1.5 and 7.5). Each sign would be located next to a driveway entrance on Mineral Point Road, and would direct visitors looking for the different offices on site.

The applicant is also requesting for two large directional signs. The first sign (5A) is located in front of the new building, by the ramp connecting the sidewalk. This sign identifies the visitor's main entrance to the new amenities building coming from the sidewalk or up the ramp and has a total net area of is 13.88 sq. ft. The second sign (2.5) is located behind the main ground sign located in the middle driveway entrance on Mineral Point Road. This sign will provide direction to the various types of vehicles coming in the driveway, like individual passenger parking and bus drop off. This sign has a total net area of 17.89 sq. ft. and is 4' 3" tall.

Near the outdoor patio, by the visitor drop off location, is the campus identification sign. The applicant did not provide the overall height or width of the structure, however the sign is shown to have a total net area of 39.34 sq. ft.

Each sign has the same design and material for the base, and each face is made of routed aluminum with push thru acrylic letters, except for signs 5 and 5A. These two signs would be internally illuminated or back lit channel letters mounted on what appears to be natural stone cladding, which is also used on the new amenities building.

Staff Comments: The CMFG Life campus is over 27 acres, has three buildings with three different offices, and four drive way entrances for parking on the site (three on Mineral Point, and one on South Rosa Road). It appears that three of these entrances are mainly for employees to access the campus, and the middle driveway entrance on Mineral Point Road is the visitor's entrance to the site, leading directly to parking reserved for visitors in the underground garage. Therefore, having the two signs (1.5 and 7.5) at the proposed locations will aid visitors coming to the site, especially from the west. The two large directional signs at the visitors' driveway entrance will provide additional aid to directing people who are dropped off versus parking at the site.

The proposed identification sign creates a sense of place for the campus (similar to the Exact Sciences campus on Exact Lane), as well as produces something unique out of an otherwise bulky air intake for the underground parking garage located next to the outdoor seating patio for the amenities building. The approved site plan also notes concrete seat wall in front of this structure, inviting employees and visitors to enjoy the space.

The ground signs appear compliant in 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. **Recommendation: 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 signs 5 and 5A are made of back lit channel letters. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

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 for two directional signs, larger than the three square feet allowed per code. One sign (4.3) is located inside the first driveway, past the large directional sign, near a curb cut to be used for emergency vehicles. This sign is 5' 3" tall, and has a total net area of 7.31 sq. ft. The other directional sign (6.5) is located further in the lot, to direct pedestrians on the site. This sign would have an overall height of 6' 5", and have a net area of 9 sq. ft. per side. Both signs are similar in material and design as the other proposed ground signs in this proposal.

Staff Comments: While the amenities building will be used by employees working on campus on daily basis, it is expected that the building will also have a number of visitors, with the new 500 seat auditorium and customer exchange center. The two proposed ground signs will assist with guiding vehicles to their appropriate locations as well pedestrians that may be new to the campus or visitor who ended up parking in a different area. As these directional signs would not otherwise comply with our allowance for 3 sq. ft. for a directional sign, CDR approval is required. **Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

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 proposing two wall signs, both of which would be located on the fifth floor of the building. One sign would face Mineral Point Road (10.1 on the south elevation) and would have a total net area of 119 sq. ft. The sign appears to be less than 30% of the signable area, however elevation dimensions have not been provided to confirm this. The second sign would face South Rosa Road (11 on the east elevation) and would have a total net area of 52.83 sq. ft. This sign also appears to be no more than 30% of the signable area, but dimensions were not provided.

Staff Comments: The first criteria of Comprehensive Design Review requires visual harmony between the signs, buildings, and building site. The proposed signs would be located on the top story of the building and have the option of being internally illuminated or back lit channel letters. However, even though these signs are of a compliant size and location, the existing wall signs found on the other buildings are located on the second or third story and consist of reverse-lit channel letters.

It appears the intent of the proposed signs are for long views, as the approved plans show the fifth story wall 12' behind the main façade of the building, and the building itself is shown to be 42' away from the sidewalk. These kinds of conditions would prevent the signs on the fifth floor from being easily viewed from while on the adjacent streets. And while Staff is supportive of the new amenity building having code compliant wall signage, there is concern the proposed signs do not relate to the existing wall signs in both location and potentially lighting. Staff believes if the signs were lowered slightly, (maybe to the spandrel above the fourth floor windows), the proposed signage would relate better to the other existing wall signs found on the site. Therefore, Staff believes the first CDR criteria has not been met. **Recommendation: Staff requests the commission take consideration on this, and request lowering the sign locations and requiring the signs to be back lit channel letters. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.**

Notes:

- Dimensions of the signable area will need to be provided in the final CDR.
- When existing wall and directional signs are replaced, an alteration to the CDR will be required to confirm location, size, and design is consistent with the signage approved in this CDR (this includes sign E noted on the site plan).
- Dimensions of the net and gross area for all the ground signs will need to be provided in the final CDR.