ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

January 10, 2024

PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: **660 South Whitney Way**

Project Name: **Chase Bank**

Application Type: **Approval for Comprehensive Design Review of Signage**

Legistar File ID # 80869

Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

The applicant is requesting a Comprehensive Design Review for signage for a bank currently converting the existing building which was previously used as a restaurant. The property is located in the Regional Mixed-Use (RMX) zoning district and abuts South Whitney Way (5 lanes, 30 mph). The subject property is part of a larger Planned Multi-use site, which extends to Tokay Boulevard and Odana Road, and currently has seven ground signs. The applicant is requesting an additional ground sign for their zoning lot, along with three wall signs and two parking lot directional signs. This CDR would only apply to this specific zoning lot.

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.*

Pursuant to Section 33.24(10)(c)4, MGO, the Urban Design Commission shall consider in each case those of the following guidelines and requirements as may be appropriate to signage:

Signs . Because of the relationship between the University of Wisconsin Research Park and commercial activities of this area, it is necessary that the location and treatment of signs be appropriate to both activities. Signs in the district shall meet the following requirements and conform as much as possible to the following guidelines:

a. Requirements .

i. Signs (including, but not limited to, awnings or canopies with 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 Sec. 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 from the public right-of-way 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. A minimum setback of twenty (20) feet is required for all signs exceeding twenty (20) square feet in net area. (Am. by ORD-09-00091, 8-1-09)

vii. The height of a ground or wall sign shall not exceed ten (10) feet unless a higher sign is specifically approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the following criteria:

A. An exception from the height limitations is necessary for the 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 height limitation will result in a sign more in scale with the building and site and will result in a superior overall design.

viii. The net area of a ground or wall sign shall not exceed forty (40) square feet unless a larger sign is specifically approved by the Urban Design Commission based upon the following criteria:

A. An exception from the size limitation is necessary for the 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 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-09-00091, 8-1-09)

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.

b. Guidelines .

i. Signs should identify the activity without imposing upon the view of businesses or activities of the district.

ii. A sign 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.

v. Illuminated signs should be lit internally or from the ground, not with fixtures projecting from the sign.

Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance: This planned multi-use site is allowed up to two ground signs with a combined net area of 80 sq. ft., and a maximum height of 10' for monument style signs, based off on 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 one internally illuminated double-sided monument styled ground sign on a zoning lot that already has more than two ground signs, previously approved by CDR. The sign has an overall height of 6' 5" and a net area of 25.33 sq. ft. per side, making the total net area 50.66 sq. ft.

Staff Comments: As stated above, this zoning lot has a total of seven approved ground signs, but on properties that are under different ownership and therefore not controlled by this applicant. This is a stand-alone building under separate ownership. As such, having a ground sign is reasonable and consistent with the other buildings in the zoning lot. The proposed height and net area of sign would comply with the sign ordinance if it was located at the driveway entrance; however, this site does not have a driveway entrance of their own, and instead accessed by entering different zoning lots. The applicant is proposing for the ground sign to be in front of the lot, which would provide the best identification for the sign. The sign base has been designed to have the same color masonry as found on the building, creating visually harmony between the ground sign and the building.

As noted in the UDD 3 sign requirements, the proposed ground sign is required to be setback 20 feet from the property line. The proposed monument sign has a setback of 12.5 feet. The UDC may modify sign setbacks based on the CDR criteria, as well as those criteria pursuant to MGO 31.043(2), that generally speak to visibility, and design and scale compatibility with existing building. Given that the site is situated several feet above the street and adjacent sidewalk and that the building is significantly setback from the street, the reduced setback will ensure visibility of the proposed sign and identification of the site from the street for motorists and pedestrians. As noted above, the proposed monument-style sign is designed in a manner that is consistent and compatible with the building, including masonry, as well as with the other proposed signage on the building.

Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review and UDD criteria have been met given the setback of the building and visibility of the signable area from the street have been met. This recommendation is subject to further testimony and new information provided during the hearing.

Wall Signs and Roof 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. Standard net area allows

for 40% of the signable area, or two square feet of signage for each lineal foot of building frontage not to exceed 100% of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 80 sq. ft. in net area.

Proposed Wall Signage: The applicant is proposing two wall signs and one roof sign. Each sign will have 24" tall internally illuminated channel letters and 2' 8" tall logo, and a total net area of 29.78 sq. ft. The proposed signs will be installed on the north, west, and east elevations, which face either parking for the zoning lot, or the street.

Staff Comments: The proposed wall signs and roof sign complies with the sign ordinance, however they do not comply with the UDD #6 requirements related to height and therefore needs CDR approval from UDC.

As noted in the UDD 3 sign requirements, the wall signage is required to be mounted at a height of 10 feet from grade. The proposed wall signage is proposed to be mounted at heights above 10 feet, including at just under 15 feet on the east elevation, just under 13 feet on the north side of the building on the roof, and just under 14 feet on the west elevation. The UDC may modify sign height based on the CDR criteria, as well as those criteria pursuant to MGO 33.24(10)(c)(4)(a)(vii), that generally speak to visibility from the nearest roadway, and design and scale compatibility with existing building. Given the design elements of the existing building, including masonry detailing and architectural features (i.e. canopies and lighting), signage cannot be located lower on the building without creating conflicts. In addition, given that the site sits several feet above the street and adjacent sidewalk and that the building is significantly setback from the street, the proposed mounting height will result in improve visibility and identification of the site from the street for motorists and pedestrians.

Recommendation: Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review and UDD criteria have been met given the setback of the building and visibility of the signable area from the street. 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)(l), 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 non-illuminated monument-style parking lot signs, each with an overall height of 3' and a net area of 2.36 sq. ft. per side. The signs consist of aluminum faces with vinyl copy.

Staff Comments: The proposed signage complies with the sign ordinance, so special exceptions need to be granted for these signs.

Staff Conditions/Required Plan Revisions:

- 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."