

## ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

September 4, 2019



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 5505 Endeavor Lane  
**Project Name:** Exact Sciences  
**Application Type:** Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval  
**Legistar File ID #** [56724](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector

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The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL Approval for signage at an existing property in the University Research Park, where Exact Sciences is currently constructing a five story office building which will be the corporate headquarters for the business. This site is located in a Suburban Employment (SE) district. This is a standalone lot bordered by Research Park Boulevard (2 Lanes, 30mph), South Whitney Way (6 Lanes, 35 mph), Endeavor Lane (2 Lanes, 25 mph), and Charmany Drive (2 Lanes, 25 mph).

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.*

**Wall and Above-Roof Signs Permitted per Sign Ordinance:** Summarizing Section 31.07, wall signs may be attached flat to or affixed parallel with a distance of not more than 15 inches from the wall. No sign affixed flat against a building wall shall extend beyond any edge of such wall. There shall be one signable area for each façade facing a street or parking lot 33 feet in width or greater. For buildings with more than one tenant, each tenant is allowed a signable area as reasonably close to its tenant space as possible. Standard net area allows for 30% of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 120 sq. ft. in net area. For multi-story buildings with more than one vertical occupancy, *there may be up to two additional signable areas per façade displayed above the first story, with no limitation on the height of placement, but only one sign per occupant, per façade*

An above-roof sign is a sign, any portion of which is displayed above the roofline. Above-roof signs may be displayed in the IL and IG employment districts and as allowed in Sec. 31.04(2)(b)2.b.iii. and iv., if no wall or roof sign is displayed on the corresponding facade. The signable area for an above-roof sign is calculated on the corresponding wall facade and can be transferred above the roof line. An above-roof sign may extend to a maximum height of ten (10) feet above the roofline.

Furthermore, Section 31.043(3)(c) allows the UDC to permit the use of an above-roof sign when the architecture of the building does not provide a reasonable signable area.

**Proposed Signage:** The applicant is requesting approval for two signs above the roofline. One would be mounted on the north elevation and the other on the south elevation of the newly constructed building. Each proposed sign would have a total net of about 150 sq. ft., 30 sq. ft. larger than what the code would allow. It is unclear how high above the roof the sign would sit on the mechanical screening. No other wall signage is proposed in the CDR.

**Staff Comments:** The applicant requests a sign that cannot be approved at any similarly zoned property without a UDC exception. Section 31.043(c) states the UDC can permit the use of an above-roof sign on a given zoning lot where not otherwise allowed in Group 3 districts provided that if the signs on adjacent properties reduce the effectiveness of other types of conforming signs or *where topographic relationships between structures and right-of-ways would deem their use appropriate*. CDR, through its standards, is designed to allow for unique and high-design signage, with consideration to integration to the site and necessity. The mechanical screen is basically a screen wall, not an architectural element at the top of the building that is integrated into the architecture of the building.

There are three approved examples of this type of signage in the city: the TDS/Johnson Bank building on Junction Road, which clearly has an architecturally integrated building topper with integrated architecture, and associated appropriate signage. The UDC reapproved approved this signage August 14, which was previously part of the PD and now an approved CDR. The second is the above-roof sign at 2921 Landmark Place, which consists of signage on the mechanical screening located on the north and west elevations, which UDC approved through CDR March 21, 2018. The third is the Navitus above-roof sign, which UDC approved as part of a CDR August 22, 2018.

The facades on the buildings are highly articulated and consist mostly of vision glass, providing a small number of signable areas, all limited in size. Without having to change a part of the façade material on the building to create a signable area, the only other location to place a decently sized identification sign is on the mechanical screening above the roof. While the applicant does not provide information as to how high the sign will sit above the roof, approved architectural plans in the Zoning Department show the mechanical screening to be over 17' tall. Based on that information, the top of the sign will probably be beyond 10' which the code states as the maximum height of an above-roof sign. The applicant explains that the sign is placed higher on the screening, to

provide long-view identification. Given the irregular shape of the building, the distance from the mechanical screening to the edge of the building varies from about 31' to about 39'. If the sign is installed closer to the roof in order to meet code, it would lose visibility from the street sooner than having it installed in the proposed location.

As for the size of the sign, the applicant provides illustrations of a code compliant sized sign above the roof, which seems slightly smaller than what the applicant is requesting; however, they do not seem to fit with the overall scale of the building like the slightly larger sign accomplishes.

**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 code.**

**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 (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 five ground signs. The main ground sign would have a total net of 90.72 sq. ft. and would be placed in the planting bed near the newly constructed building and the intersection of Endeavor Drive and the driveway entrance to the parking lot. 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 wayfinding signs will be installed around the property, near driveway entrances, directing various vehicles visiting the site to their appropriate destination.

**Staff Comments:** The proposed main ground sign will comply with code; however, there is an existing ground sign on the site which the applicant does not mention in the application. If the sign is to remain after these signs are installed, then the application should be amended to include the existing sign with the proposed CDR. For the remaining ground signs, they are essential for directing employees, visitors, and delivery trucks coming to the main headquarters for Exact Sciences, as the letter of intent states the company anticipates 400-500 employees coming to the site, not to mention other daily activities (deliveries, visitors, etc.) the site may experience. **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 code.**

**Notes:**

- Applicant shall include pictures and dimensions of the second Exact Sciences ground sign with the final approval
- Dimensions and boxing shall be provided for the net of all the signage.
- Applicant shall identify the existing ground sign and if it is to remain in the CDR.