

ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

May 27, 2020



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 206 Cottage Grove Road
Project Name: The Grove
Application Type: Comprehensive Design Review Initial/Final Approval
Legistar File ID # [60407](#)
Prepared By: Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector
Reviewed By: Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review INITIAL/FINAL APPROVAL. This property is located in the Commercial Corridor – Transitional (CC-T) district, and is a part of a new mixed use development, approved by Plan Commission March 5th, 2018. Of the two buildings on the lot, only signage for the four story, mixed-use building, located in the front is being proposed at this time. The other building, located in the back of the lot, will only contain multi-family dwelling units. This zoning lot abuts Cottage Grove Road (3 lanes, 25 mph), Johns Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), and Monona Drive (4 lanes, 30 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 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 a single occupancy, stand-alone, non-residential building with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area, or a non-residential occupancy or tenant space with twenty-five thousand (25,000) square feet or more in floor area in a multi-tenant building, 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.

There are two relevant code definitions relative to the proposal, Signable Area and Façade.

Signable Area is defined in MGO 31.03:

One designated area of the facade of the building up to the roof line that is free of doors, windows (for purposes of this definition, spandrel panels or other non-vision glass used as an exterior building material are not considered windows) or other major architectural detail, that extends no higher than the juncture of the wall and the roof...

Façade is defined in MGO 31.03:

Any separate face or surface of a building, including parapet walls, and roof surfaces or any part of a building which encloses or covers usable space. Where separate facades are oriented in the same direction, or where the inside angle at the intersection of two surfaces is greater than one-hundred and thirty-five (135) degrees, they are to be considered as part of a single facade.

Proposed Wall Signage: The main wall signs identifying the apartment building will be mounted on the wing wall located in front of the building. The signs would be installed on the East and West of this architectural feature, which are not qualifying signable areas, as the wall is not part of the building which encloses useable space. The backer panel of the proposed signs will mirror the seams of the wing façade material and both will also slightly project beyond the wall. A separate panel will connect the two leaf projections, giving the illusion that it is part of the wall. Each sign will have a total net area of about 36.65 sq. ft., however the letters and logo would only be 16.84 sq. ft. of the net total.

The proposed first-floor commercial signage has designated areas available on the East, South, and West elevations. The East and South elevations qualify for signage as they either face the street or a parking lot, however the West elevation faces a drive without any parking. This would normally need special approval from the Urban Design Commission under Sec. 31. 043(3)(d), but as this site needs CDR approval for other signage, this is now part of the CDR request.

The first-floor commercial signage design standards consist of a raceway that extends 12 inches beyond the building façade, with 4 inch deep frames, making the sign stick out a total of 16 inches from the building façade. The placement of the raceway will overlap the façade material change from brick to the storefront windows. The applicant proposes logos be no larger than 2' 3" and the letter height not exceed 2' in height, with a total overall height of 2' 3" when letters are stacked on top of each other.

Staff Comments: The proposed signage for the multi-family dwelling unit portion of the mixed use building gives the appearance of a projecting sign, however it is actually two signs that will be installed on the wing wall located the south elevation of the building. The code does not allow for projecting signs to go beyond the third floor, however as it is not a projecting sign and instead considered a wall sign, an exception is not needed for this. The applicant has also pointed out in their letter of intent that if the signs were to be placed lower on the

wing wall, the sign could affect the apartment units when it lights up at night. The fourth floor by the wing wall building's fitness room, so no residential units would be affected.

As stated above, the wing wall is not a qualifying signable area for wall signs, as it does not enclose useable open space in the building. However, the proposed signage is of high quality design and gives the appearance of fitting with the architecture of the building. The backer panel has been designed to match the building material color and seams, as well give the illusion the sign is part of the wall by having the leaf logo project out slightly from the wall.

As for the proposed design of the first-floor commercial signage, while the architecture of the building provides other potential signable areas, the proposed sign design and locations will create a uniform look between tenant spaces, while limiting the height and size of the signs. **Staff has no objection to the CDR request and recommends the UDC find the standards for CDR review have been met.**

Notes:

- Any additional signage for this lot will require a CDR alteration, either by staff or the UDC.
- Final artwork for apartment signage shall show dimensions of backer panel projection, for confirming net area total for the wall sign.
- Add requirement for first-floor commercial wall signage that overall height of sign cannot exceed 2' 3".
- The final CDR documents shall state that all other signage not requiring permits shall comply with MGO 31.