

## ZONING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

December 2, 2020



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

**Project Address:** 1211 Fish Hatchery Road  
**Project Name:** SSM Health South Madison Campus  
**Application Type:** Approval for Comprehensive Design Review of Signage  
**Legistar File ID #** [62786](#)  
**Prepared By:** Chrissy Thiele, Zoning Inspector  
**Reviewed By:** Matt Tucker, Zoning Administrator

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The applicant is requesting Comprehensive Design Review of signage for a new five story Health Clinic building with parking to the south of the building and on another zoning lot across the street of Fish Hatchery Road. This property is located in a Commercial Corridor - Transitional (CC-T) district, abutting Midland Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), Fish Hatchery Road, (4 lanes, 25 mph), South Street (2 lanes, 25 mph), and future right-of-way Cedar Street (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 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. Standard net area allows for 30% of the signable area. In no case shall the sign exceed 120 sq. ft. in net area.

Furthermore, Section 31.07(3) states, “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. (a list of signage exceptions which may be granted by the UDC), 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 roofline. An above-roof sign may extend to a maximum height of ten (10) feet above the roofline.”

**Proposed Signage:** The applicant is requesting two above roof signs on the south and east elevations, which would be mounted on the mechanical screening located above the fifth story. These signs would have a total net area of 113.77 sq. ft. The dimensions of the signable area have not been provided for each elevation in order in order for staff to confirm the percentage, but it appears that the signs would be less than 30% of the signable area and under the maximum size of 120 sq. ft. These signs consist of individual channel letters with perforated vinyl, so that the letters appear blue in the day and white at night.

The applicant is also requesting two non-illuminated channel letters signs on the west and north elevations. The west elevation would be in the first story and have a total net area of 4.69 sq. ft. The sign on the north elevation would be located on the second story and have a total net area of 34 sq. ft. The dimensions of the signable area have not been provided for each elevation in order in order for staff to confirm the percentage, but it appears that the signs would also be less than 30% of the signable area. The applicant is also requesting a second wall sign on the south elevation, with a total net area of 22.3 sq. ft. Again, dimensions were not provided for the signable area, so staff could not confirm if the sign covered less than 30% of the signable area.

**Staff Comments:** The applicant is requesting two signs that cannot be approve 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 when the architecture of the building does not provide a reasonable signable area*”. The facades on the building are highly articulated, consisting mostly of vision glass or architectural features, as shown in the building elevations provided by the applicant. The above roof signs on the south and east elevations face commercial properties and can be viewed from principal arterial roads (Fish Hatchery Road and South Park Street), which will help vehicles locate the site from further away.

The applicant has also made a point of keeping the wall signs to the north and west unobtrusive to residential properties in the proximity by keeping them within the first two stories and non-illuminated, and appear to comply with code. However, the applicant is also requesting for a second sign on the south elevation, which would need CDR approval. This sign, while shown in the illustrations, has not been addressed in the CDR criteria, nor is there any explanation of purpose in the letter of intent. This sign spells out the address of the building, however as it faces the expansive parking lot to the south and will be mounted to the building façade behind the canopy pillars, this will not be easily viewable from the street, and visitors would most likely not see the sign until they are at the building entrance. **Staff recommends UDC find the CDR standards are not met and refer the request for the second smaller wall sign on the south elevation, or deny the request. For the remaining signs, 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.**

**Ground Signs Permitted by Sign Ordinance:** This zoning lot 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 of the prevailing speeds and number of traffic lanes. A single sided sign would be allowed a maximum net area of 40 sq. ft.

Summarizing Section 31.03(2) and 31.044(1)(I), parking lot directional signage are necessary for safety or directing traffic flow to a location on the premises on which the sign is located. These signs can be a maximum net area 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 net area of 9 sq. ft. and require a 10 ft. setback from the property line.

**Proposed Ground Signage:** The applicant is proposing 1 main ground sign and 10 parking lot directional/wayfinding signs. The design throughout the signs is consistent of aluminum faces, with the internally illuminated signs routed out for push-thru acrylic copy, and the non-illuminated signs having reflective vinyl for the copy.

The main ground sign would be located at the southwest corner of the lot and would face traffic on Fish Hatchery Road. Staff could not confirm if the sign was single or double sided. Regardless, it is an internally illuminated monument styled ground sign, with an overall height of 7' 3" and total net area of 68.77 sq. ft. per side, which would be 28.77 sq. ft. larger than what the code allows.

There are four larger internally illuminated parking lot directional/wayfinding signs proposed, that would direct traffic on the streets looking to enter the lot. All but one of these signs would be double sided and all would have an overall height of 7 feet. It is estimated that the net area for each sign ranges between 11 sq. ft. and 27.5 sq. ft., however boxing for the net area has not been provided.

The remaining six non-illuminated ground signs are smaller parking lot directional/wayfinding signs, which would direct traffic into and through the lot. These signs would be double sided and have an overall height 5 feet. It is estimated the net area for each sign ranges from 3 sq. ft. to 6 sq. ft., however boxing for the net area has not been provided.

**Staff Comments:** The applicant states the sign design proposed is based on the SSM Health signage standards, which have been implemented at other SSM Health facilities across the community. However, while the design and colors used for the ground signs provide a uniform look and relate to the proposed wall signs, the applicant does not provide any explanation for granting a CDR exception to allow the main oversized sign on the southwest corner of the lot. Even though there are four lanes of traffic on Fish Hatchery Road, the speed limit is 30 mph and across the zoning lots across the street are primarily single family residences. Under the ordinance, the largest ground sign that could be approved is one double sided sign that had a net area of 40 sq. ft. per side, which would have a total net area of 80 sq. ft. Staff does not believe a sign larger than what the ordinance would allow can be found to meet criteria for CDR approval in this case.

For the remaining parking lot / wayfinding signs, they provide direction to visitors around and into the site, as the zoning lot encompasses an entire block and there is only one driveway entrance on Cedar Street and three

entrances on South Street. These ground signs are of a compliant height, however the net area on some sides of the signs exceed 3 sq. ft., as allowed by code. The larger size signs are located at the prominent corners of the site and at the main entrance to the front door of the facility. These appear reasonable given the placement of these signs relative to the intended viewers.

**Staff recommends UDC find the CDR standards are not met for the CDR request to allow a larger main ground sign on the southwest corner of the lot, but recommends a code-complaint sized sign of similar design be allowed. For the remaining parking lot directional/wayfinding signs, 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.**

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.”
- Final site plan shall be updated to show all ground signs on SSM property and not in the right-of-way, as well as out of all the vision triangle (some of which also need to be corrected or added). Any signs found to be in the vision triangle will need a separate approval from Traffic Engineering.
- Remove Sign location 14, 16, and 22 from the letter of intent, as they are not part of this CDR request.