

6.01: Consider Request for Conditional Use Permit for a Ground Sign and Wall Signage at 7800 Sunwood Drive NW (Project No. 20-102); Case of New Horizon Academy

Presentation

City Planner Anderson presented the Staff Report stating that staff recommends approving the request for a Conditional Use Permit for the requested deviations from sign standards.

Commission Business

Chairperson Bauer stated that it is clear that the Commission needs to discuss the overall sign ordinance.

City Planner Anderson stated that staff has begun to work with the planning consultant on that topic and will bring that information forward to the Commission once ready.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that there is an overlay for the Armstrong Interchange District and asked if that impacts this situation.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that district allows administrative approval of ground signs up to 150 square feet in area and 50 feet in height but excludes parcels within The COR and therefore does not apply to this parcel.

Chairperson Bauer invited the applicant to provide any additional comments.

Eric Tauscheck, Spectrum Signs, stated that he is present to address any questions. He stated that stone and masonry work has been added to the base of the sign in attempt to tie into the aesthetics of the building.

Commissioner VanScoy asked the specific reason for requesting a 25-foot sign.

Mr. Tauscheck replied that the sign would be visible from the highway. He stated that when possible, the company would like to maximize the visibility when adjacent a highway.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that if the City continues on this path, Ramsey will face a forest of signs in this area. He asked if the business would be in agreement with a monument sign.

Mr. Tauscheck replied that although that could be a possibility, it would not be visible from the highway.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that this is another reason the City needs to expedite its review of the sign ordinance.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that staff originally believed that this sign would be administratively approved but the City Attorney suggested that the Commission review this request because although allowed in the district, the language is not clear.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that The COR is not intended to be the typical suburban development and he is having difficulty continuing to support these types of requests. He recognized that visibility is important for retail and commercial businesses along Highway 10. He stated that although the master sign plan addresses that intent, it has not yet been accomplished. He stated that he would support a monument sign along the highway that would be visible to support these businesses, similar to the City signs near the rail station and Ramsey Boulevard. He agreed that visibility is critical but did not believe that ending up with multiple signs is the intention.

City Planner Anderson read language from The COR design framework related to allowed signage.

Commissioner VanScoy stated that he finds it difficult to support this situation.

Chairperson Bauer referenced the location of this property and the two vacant lots that have interest from two potential businesses. He asked if there could be shared signage for those three parcels.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated that the two vacant parcels are both owned by the City and will come forward for a lot split and therefore the City could ask for shared signage at that time. She stated that the City can still look into shared monument signage but that would be further into the future. She reviewed the type of signage that could be approved administratively, noting that this traditional ground sign would be preferred to what could be allowed under the Code.

Chairperson Bauer asked if the business would be open to building signage at this time and waiting for the future development of the adjacent parcels in attempt for shared signage.

Mr. Tauscheck stated that while he understands the intent he could not speak for the business.

Commissioner Johnson asked why the business does not use one of the open spaces on the Coborn's sign.

Mr. Tauscheck replied that there is another property owner and location for that sign, and it would not be New Horizon's space to take.

City Planner Anderson stated that he cannot speak for the management company for NorthStar Marketplace, but he presumes that they are typically promoting businesses within their own project space and not an adjacent parcel. He stated that potentially opens the discussion of off premise signage that was discussed the previous month.

Commissioner Woestehoff stated that the information shows that the sign would be illuminated and asked if that would be lit 24 hours per day.

Mr. Tauscheck replied that the illumination would be set on a timer and would be lit during set hours.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the height of the monument sign that the City owns on Ramsey Boulevard.

City Planner Anderson replied that sign is between 23 to 25 feet in height.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for the height of the U.S. Bank sign.

City Planner Anderson replied that sign is 75 feet in height.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she likes this sign proposal as it is on the applicant's property and will be paid for by the applicant. She commented that the City owned sign at Ramsey Boulevard is recommended payment and therefore the City is not always paid for those spaces. She commented that when traveling on Highway 10, she does not see a lot of signage. She stated that signage is key for businesses and attracting businesses to Ramsey. She stated that the Council recognizes that signage is key in attracting more businesses into The COR.

Commissioner Gengler commented that this is a reasonable request and it is important for businesses to be able to promote themselves and be visible.

Motion by Commissioner Peters, seconded by Commissioner Gengler, to recommend that City Council approve Resolution #20-042 granting a Conditional Use Permit to allow a 25-foot-tall ground sign as well as wall signage at 7800 Sunwood Drive NW.

Further discussion

Commissioner VanScoy cautioned that every business will want a sign and if the City does not provide reasonable support for that, it will become a forest of signage. Commissioner Johnson stated that he agrees with that and would prefer to see wall signage for now and delay additional signage until a monument sign is available.

Motion Carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Bauer, Commissioners Peters, Gengler, and Woestehoff. Voting No: Commissioners Johnson and VanScoy. Absent: Commissioner Anderson.