

## Board of Adjustment

### *Staff Report*

**CASE NUMBER:** BA17-037  
**LOCATION/ADDRESS:** 1864 E Baseline Rd  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** District 3  
**PLANNER:** Charlotte Bridges  
**OWNER:** Terra Marketing, Inc.  
**APPLICANT:** Craig Musick, The Sign Company of Arizona

**REQUEST:** *Requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow: 1) modification of an existing Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP), and 2) for an electronic message display to change more than once per hour in the LC zoning district. (PLN2017-00339)*

#### **SUMMARY OF APPLICANT'S REQUEST**

This request involves a modification to an existing CSP (BA89-121) to increase the square footage of the existing group commercial center monument signs and to transfer one unused pad tenant monument sign to a new location for use by a new pad site within the center. In addition, the proposed design of new group commercial center monument sign for the Baseline Rd. frontage includes an electronic message display with a requested message change of every 30 seconds.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends **approval** of case BA17-037, *conditioned upon the following:*

1. *Compliance with the sign plan submitted, except as modified by the conditions listed below.*
2. *The electronic message sign shall comply with all illumination intensity levels listed in Section 11-41-8-D-18c.*
3. *The electronic message display shall change a maximum of once per 30 seconds.*
4. *Compliance with all requirements of the Development Services with regard to the issuance of sign permits.*

#### **SITE CONTEXT**

**CASE SITE:** Existing group commercial center – LC Zoning District  
**NORTH:** Existing duplex residential units – RM-2 Zoning District  
**EAST:** **(Across Gilbert Rd)** Existing group commercial center – LC Zoning District  
**SOUTH:** **(Across Baseline Rd)** Existing group commercial center – City of Gilbert  
**WEST:** Existing single-family residential – AG Zoning District

#### **STAFF ANALYSIS**

##### **Detached Signs**

The subject site is an existing group commercial center located at the northwest corner of Gilbert and Baseline Roads. The applicant is proposing to replace the existing 12-foot tall, 65 square-foot “Center Identification” monument signs, one along Gilbert Rd. and one along Baseline Rd, with redesigned 12-foot tall, 80 square-foot monument signs and construct a redesigned 5-foot 8-inch tall and 24 square-foot “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument sign at a new pad site along Baseline Rd. In addition, the proposed design for the “Center Identification” monument sign along Baseline Rd. frontage includes an electronic message display panel with a requested message change of every 30 seconds. No change is proposed to the CSP attached signage

allowance, which reflects the current Zoning Ordinance attached sign allowance.

The CSP approved two different monument sign types, a “Center Identification” monument sign at 12-feet tall and 65 square-feet, and a “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument sign at 6-feet 9-inches tall and 26 square-feet. Additionally, one “Center Identification” monument sign and two “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument signs were approved along Gilbert Road and one “Center Identification” monument sign and three “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument signs along were approved Baseline Road. Staff has created the following table to compare the standard sign code allowances, the current CSP (approved as case BA89-121), and this request for modification.

Street	Frontage	Code Aggregate Sign Area	Code Aggregate Sign Height	Approved 1989 Sign Area	Approved 1989 Sign Height	Proposed Aggregate Sign height	Proposed Aggregate Sign Area
<b>Baseline Road 4 signs</b>	Approx. 800 feet	400 s.f.	40 feet	<b><i>143 s.f.</i></b>	<b><i>33 feet</i></b>	<b>33 feet</b>	<b>156 s.f.</b>
<b>Gilbert Road 3 signs</b>	Approx. 400 feet	200 s.f.	20 feet	<b><i>117 s.f.</i></b>	<b><i>25 feet*</i></b>	<b>25 feet</b>	<b>132 s.f.</b>

\* Note, the CSP approved an aggregate sign height of 25 feet along Gilbert Rd., which exceeds the code allowance by 5 feet. The minutes for case BA 89-121 state, “This project is very large so the extra 5 feet in height is in scale and will not be detrimental to adjacent properties.”

The requested “Center Identification” monument signs essentially comply with the aggregate sign height of the CSP; however, the aggregate sign area is increased by 30 square feet (15 square feet increase per monument sign). Even with the requested increase, the proposed aggregate sign area is less than the aggregate amount of sign area allowed by code and the individual signs do not exceed the maximum allowed 80 square-foot sign area or 12-foot maximum allowed height (Mesa Zoning Ordinance 11-41-6.E.d)

The other requested modification to the CSP, transfers the location of an unused “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument sign from the southeast corner of the shopping center (not including the existing car wash located at the northwest corner of Gilbert and Baseline Rds.) to a new location along Baseline Rd. for use by a future pad tenant (a new pad was approved by Planning and Zoning case Z17-008). The proposed “Major and Pad Tenant” monument sign design calls-out a height of 6-feet 8-inches, plus an additional 16 inches (20%) of architectural embellishment, and a 24 square-foot sign area and essentially complies with the CSP.

While the proposed monument signs colors are harmonious with the existing monument signs, the materials and sign styles are different, but not incompatible. Currently, the shopping center is only utilizing the two allowed “Center Identification” monument signs and two of the five allowed “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument signs. The existing “Center Identification” monument signs will be replaced with the new design and any new/remodeled “Major and Pad Tenant Identification” monument signs would be required to meet the new design standard.

**Special Use Permit for Frequency of Message Changes for an Electronic Message Display**

The Sign Ordinance requires messages shown on electronic message displays to remain static for a minimum of one hour unless a Special Use Permit (SUP) is granted. Through a SUP application, a request may be filed to change the message more frequently than once per hour. The review criteria for this SUP include a determination that the proposed sign is found to be compatible with and not detrimental to surrounding properties, and through consideration of specific factors of Section 11-19-8(D)17:

1. The speed and volume of the vehicular traffic visually exposed to the sign;
2. The presence of other signs or distracting influences in proximity to the sign location; and
3. The extent to which the design of the sign is compatible with other signs located on the premises.

The maximum speed limit on this portion of Baseline Road is 45 mph. The number of monument signs is minimal with the proposed electronic message sign being the only one within this shopping center.

Finally, the request for a 30 second message display is consistent with past Board of Adjustment decisions, which have allowed message changes every 30 seconds. The basis for these decisions has been the idea of having one message visible for approximately a quarter mile as a vehicle approaches the sign. A static message for 30 seconds ensures the message is static long enough for the driver to read whatever it says quickly, in a single display, and then divert their attention back to the roadway.

**Findings for the SUP for the Comprehensive Sign Plan:**

- 1.1 The current Comprehensive Sign Plan allows for a maximum of 12' in height and 65 square-feet in sign area for "Center Identification" detached signs. The applicant's request for 12' in height and 80 square-feet in sign area "Center Identification" detached signs increases the aggregate sign area allowed by the CSP but and is less than the aggregate sign area allowed by code.
- 1.2 The proposed "Center Identification" detached signs do not exceed the maximum 80 square-foot sign area or 12-feet maximum allowed height allowed by code.
- 1.3 The proposed signs meet the intent of the original Comprehensive Sign Plan (BA89-121).
- 1.4 Transferring one "Major and Pad Tenant Identification" monument sign from one location to another along the Baseline Road frontage does not increase the number of detached signs, the aggregate height or aggregate area of the detached signs of the Baseline Road frontage.
- 1.5 The proposed revised detached sign designs are compatible with the design of the existing detached signs for this group commercial center, and represent "an equal to or higher quality of design" when compared to the existing signs.

**Findings for the SUP for Frequency of the Electronic Message Change**

- 2.1 The speed limit is 45 mph for this portion of Baseline Road.
- 2.2 There is minimal sign clutter in this area so a message frequency of once every 30 seconds would not be detrimental or cause a distraction. It represents one message per quarter mile for vehicles traveling past it at 45-miles per hour.

Zoning Ordinance, Section 11-41-6 (E) – Permitted Signs: (Note: Standard Allowances when not modified by a CSP)

E. NC, LC, GC, PEP, LI, GI and HI zoning districts:

1. Detached Signs.

- a. One (1) square feet of total sign area per lineal feet of street frontage.
- b. One (1) feet of total sign height per each ten feet (10') of street frontage.
- c. Developments, including group C-O-I developments, displaying more than one (1) detached sign per street frontage shall be permitted 50% of total aggregate sign area and sign height specified in (1) and (2) above.
- d. No detached sign shall exceed 80 square feet in area or 12 feet in height.

Zoning Ordinance, Section 11-41-8 (D) – Supplemental Provisions:

D. General Provisions

- 13. A Comprehensive Sign Plan for a proposed or existing development/building may be approved by the Zoning Administrator/Board of Adjustment in conjunction with the granting of a Special Use Permit under Title 11, Administration and Procedures Chapter of the Mesa City Code. The purpose of a Comprehensive Sign Plan is to provide for the establishment of signage criteria that are tailored to a specific development or location, and which may vary from specific Ordinance provisions. The intent is to provide for flexible sign criteria that promote superior design through architectural integration of the site, buildings and signs.

A Comprehensive Sign Plan shall include the location, size, height, construction material, color, and type of illumination and orientation of all proposed signs, either permanent or temporary.

A Comprehensive Sign Plan containing elements which exceed the permitted height, area and number of signs specified in this Chapter may be approved by the Zoning Administrator/Board of Adjustment only upon a finding that:

- a. The development site contains unique or unusual physical conditions, such as topography, proportion, size or relation to a public street that would limit or restrict normal sign visibility; or
- b. The proposed or existing development exhibits unique characteristics of land use, architectural style, site location, physical scale, historical interest or other distinguishing features that represent a clear variation from conventional development; or
- c. The proposed signage incorporates special design features such as logos, emblems, murals or statuary that are integrated with the building architecture.

The construction and placement of individual signs contained in the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan shall be subject to the issuance of sign permits in accordance with 11-19-8(E).

Zoning Ordinance, Section 11-41-8 (D) 17 – Supplemental Provisions:

D. General Provisions

- 17. Electronic message displays are permitted in accordance with the following:
  - a. Displays of static messages, where the message change sequence is accomplished immediately or by means of fade or dissolve modes, shall be permitted as a matter of right, subject to the sign size limitations otherwise applicable for the site, provided each message is displayed for a minimum period of one (1) hour.
  - b. A Special Use Permit in accordance with Chapter 70 this Ordinance shall be required for approval of the display of static messages displayed for a minimum period less than one (1) hour, and changed by any mode, or for message changes accomplished by the means of travel or scrolling

modes. The Zoning Administrator/Board of Adjustment may attach conditions to the approval of such electronic message displays, including limitation on the minimum time period for the display of each message, to the extent necessary to ensure that the granting of the Special Use Permit will not have a detrimental effect on the surrounding area or the public welfare, and will be consistent with the purpose and intent of this Chapter. In making this determination, the Zoning Administrator/Board of Adjustment shall consider the following factors:

1. The speed and volume of the vehicular traffic visually exposed to the sign;
2. The presence of other signs or distracting influences in proximity to the sign location; and
3. The extent to which the design of the sign is compatible with other signs located on the premises. Exception: On a freeway landmark monument, such display is allowed only after approval of a Council Use Permit.

- c. The intensity of the LED display shall not exceed the levels specified in the chart below:

INTENSITY LEVEL (NITS)		
COLOR	DAYTIME	NIGHTTIME
Red Only	3,150	1,125
Green Only	6,300	2,250
Amber Only	4,690	1,675
Full Color	7,000	2,500

Prior to the issuance of a sign permit, the applicant shall provide a written certification from the sign manufacturer that the light intensity has been factory pre-set not to exceed the levels specified in the chart above, and the intensity level is protected from end-user manipulation by password-protected software or other method as deemed appropriate by the Building Safety Director.