

# Board of Adjustment

## *Staff Report*

**CASE NUMBER:** BOA18-00989  
**LOCATION/ADDRESS:** 1951 & 1955 W. Baseline Rd. and 2015 S. Dobson Road  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** District 3  
**STAFF PLANNER:** Erik Hansen, Management Assistant II  
**OWNER/APPLICANT:** Arizona Commercial Signs

**REQUEST:** *Requesting a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow modifications to an existing Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) in the Limited Commercial (LC) zoning district.*

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

This request is for the approval of a Special Use Permit (SUP) to modify an existing Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) for the Dobson Ranch Shopping Center, located south and east of the southeast corner of Dobson Road and Baseline Road. The proposed CSP modification would allow two existing detached signs on the property to be replaced with newly design monument signs.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

*Staff recommends **approval** of case **BOA18-00989**, with the following conditions:*

- 1. Compliance with the site plan, sign plan details, and project narrative submitted.*
- 2. Compliance with all requirements of the Development Services Department in the issuance of sign permits.*
- 3. The detached sign proposed at Dobson Road shall be reduced in height from the proposed 12' to a maximum of 8' in height.*

### **SITE CONTEXT**

**CASE SITE:** Existing Commercial – zoned Limited Commercial (LC)  
**NORTH:** (Across Baseline Road) Existing Commercial – zoned LC  
**EAST:** Existing Offices – zoned LC  
**SOUTH:** Existing Multi-residence – zoned residential RM-3  
**WEST:** (Across Dobson Road) Offices and residential – zoned LC and residential RS-6

### **STAFF SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS**

The project site was annexed by the city of Mesa in 1972 and developed as a shopping center in 1974. In 1997, a CSP was approved for the project site including the size, design and placement of two (2) detached signs (Case# ZA97-026).

#### **Special Use Permit - Comprehensive Sign Plan:**

The purpose of a Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) is to create a signage plan and criteria tailored to a specific development. The intent is to provide a plan that promote superior design through architectural integration of the site, buildings, and signs. Below is a summary of the intent of the request and conformance with the MZO:

- The intent of the modification is to remove the two existing detached signs, one adjacent to Baseline Road and one adjacent to Dobson Road, and to construct two new detached signs. The two new detached signs are proposed to be in the same location as the current detached signs.
- The two existing detached signs are both 12' tall and 80 square feet (SF) in area.

- The proposed detached signs are 12' in height with 1'-6" of embellishment. The detached sign adjacent to Baseline Road is proposed at 120 SF and the detached sign adjacent to Dobson Road is proposed at 80 SF.
- Section 11-43-3.D.4 of the MZO outline requirements for Commercial Use Development with 3 Separate Occupants and more than 400-feet of Street Frontage. This section of the MZO allows for one of the detached signs on the site to be 120 square feet (SF) in area and 14-feet in height; however, all other detached signs on the site are limited to a maximum of 8-feet in height and 50 SF maximum in area.
- Table 1 provides the Mesa Zoning Ordinance (MZO) allowed detached sign height, area and number based on the frontage of the property. The site frontage is more than 400' and can utilize the optional detached sign allowance.

**TABLE 1:** Optional Detached Sign Allowance per Table 11-43-3.D.4 of the MZO

Street	Frontage	MZO allowed number of signs	MZO Maximum Sign Area	MZO Maximum Sign Height
Baseline Road	±427'	2	1 @ 120 SF, and 1 at 50 SF	14' and 7'-4"
Dobson Road	±203'	1	50 SF	8'

- Table 2, below, compares the existing detached signs with the proposed detached signs. **Bolded** entries denote where the proposed CSP modifications exceeds the MZO allowances.

**TABLE 2:** Existing and Proposed Detached Signs

Street Frontage	Existing Sign Area	Proposed Sign Area	Existing Sign Height	Proposed Sign Height
Baseline Rd One (1) proposed sign	One (1) @ 80 SF	120SF	12' including embellishment	<b>12' (+ 1'6" embellishment)</b>
Dobson Rd One (1) proposed sign	One (1) @ 80 SF	<b>80SF</b>	12' including embellishment	<b>12' (+ 1'6" embellishment)</b>

- The proposed increase in area for the detached sign adjacent to Baseline Road from 80 SF to 120 SF conforms to requirements of the MZO. Per Section 11-43-3.D.4 of the MZO , 120 SF sign area is allowed on lots with over 400' of frontage.
- The increase in area and height of the sign adjacent to Dobson Road is inconsistent with Section 11-43-3.D.4 of the MZO. This section of the MZO states if the 120 SF or 14' in height sign is utilized then all other signs will be limited to 8' in height and 50 SF of area. A detached sign of 12' in height and 80 SF is proposed.
- Taking into consideration the limited visibility of the commercial center, Staff supports the request to increase the allowed sign area from 50 SF to 80 SF. However to be consistent with the MZO, the height must be reduced to 8' in height which is the allowed height of the sign, condition #3.
- Utilizing the current MZO allowances for detached signs, a second detached sign is allowed to be placed adjacent to Baseline Road, limited to 7'-4". The applicant is not requesting this second sign for Baseline Road, but is requesting to transfer the 50 SF of sign area to the Dobson Road detached sign.

- The Comprehensive Sign plan is required to obtain a Special Use Permit that requires compliance with established findings per Section 11-70-5 of the MZO.

Criteria for approval of a SUP are listed below with staff analysis for conformance:

Factor	Staff analysis
a) <i>Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies;</i>	Approval of the proposed CSP would advance the goals and objectives of both existing and future businesses located within the project site. The new, free-standing signs will upgrade the overall appeal of the center while obtaining the goals set forth by the City.
b) <i>The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and with any other applicable City plan or policies;</i>	The location, size, design, and operating characteristics are consistent within the purposes of the district with the staff proposed conditions of approval.
c) <i>The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed project or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City.</i>	The proposed CSP will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed CSP or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City.
d) <i>Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.</i>	Adequate public services, public facilities, and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed CSP.

- In addition to the findings of the Special Use Permit, Section 11-46-3 of the MZO outlines specific findings for a Comprehensive Sign Plan (CSP) to be utilized for conformance of a proposed plan.

Criteria for approval of a CSP are listed below with staff analysis for conformance:

Factor	Discussion
a) <i>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</i>	The existing bank building located on the southeast corner of Baseline and Dobson roads limits visibility to the commercial site. The existing commercial buildings are setback more than 271 feet from Baseline Road and 142 feet from Dobson Road that limits visibility of attached signs.
b) <i>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</i>	The project site has been in place since the 1970's. The current owners are updating the overall center with new paint colors for the center that are complimentary and consistent with existing/surrounding uses. The new sign designs and colors will reflect the updates to the commercial buildings.
c) <i>The proposed signage incorporates special design features such as logos, emblems, murals or statuary that are integrated with the building architecture.</i>	The Applicant has incorporated existing architectural elements to the new free-standing signs that fit the overall look of the project site.

### Summary of Applicant's Justification

As justification for the proposed CSP, the Applicant has noted:

- Without the availability of tenant panels (larger, detached signage), it has become extremely difficult to lease any of their vacancies.
- Additional tenant panels will allow tenant visibility to the favorable traffic counts on both major streets, which is currently restrictive due to the storefronts being setback.
- The existing bank building located on the southeast corner of Baseline and Dobson roads currently blocks storefront visibility.

### FINDINGS

1. The existing commercial center was constructed in the 1970's.
2. The proposed CSP does not modify attached sign allowances.
3. The proposed CSP modifications with staff recommended conditions of approval meets the criteria of Section 11-70-3 of the MZO. It is consistent with the goals of the General Plan, the development is consistent with the district, the detached signs will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties, and adequate public services are provided to the project.
4. The proposed CSP modifications with staff recommended conditions of approval meets the criteria outlined in Section 11-46-3 of the MZO. The commercial buildings are setback from 271' from Baseline Road and 142' from Dobson Road and limits visibility. The existing bank at the northwest corner of the site restricts visibility to the commercial center.
5. The sign criteria within the CSP is tailored to this specific development. The design of the signs, with the staff recommended conditions of approval, is consistent with the architectural style of the center.

### ORDINANCE REQUIREMENTS

#### Zoning Ordinance, Section 11-70-5 – Special Use Permit:

- E. **Required Findings.** A SUP shall only be granted if the approving body determines that the project as submitted or modified conforms to all of the following criteria. If it is determined that it is not possible to make all of the required findings, the application shall be denied. The specific basis for denial shall be established in the record.
1. Approval of the proposed project will advance the goals and objectives of and is consistent with the policies of the General Plan and any other applicable City plan and/or policies;
  2. The location, size, design, and operating characteristics of the proposed project are consistent with the purposes of the district where it is located and conform with the General Plan and with any other applicable City plan or policies;
  3. The proposed project will not be injurious or detrimental to the adjacent or surrounding properties in the area, nor will the proposed project or improvements be injurious or detrimental to the neighborhood or to the general welfare of the City; and
  4. Adequate public services, public facilities and public infrastructure are available to serve the proposed project.

#### Zoning Ordinance, Section 11-46-3 – Comprehensive Sign Plans:

- A. **Authorization.** The Zoning Administrator Hearing Officer or the Board of Adjustment may approve a comprehensive sign plan for a proposed or existing development or building in conjunction with the granting of a Special Use Permit in accordance with Chapters 67 and 70 of the Zoning Ordinance.
- B. **Purpose and Intent.** 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 Sign Ordinance provisions. The intent is to provide for flexible sign criteria that promote superior design through architectural integration of the site, buildings, and signs. This does not allow for consideration of sign types allowed within a zoning district.
- C. **Minimum Required Elements of Comprehensive Sign Plan.** A comprehensive sign plan shall include the location, size, height, construction material, color, type of illumination, and orientation of all proposed permanent and portable signs, and any other document(s) necessary to determine if the plan meets the review criteria.
- D. **Review criteria.** The Zoning Administrator Hearing Officer or the Board of Adjustment may approve a comprehensive sign plan containing elements which exceed the permitted height, area, and number of signs specified in this Sign Ordinance if the comprehensive sign plan conforms to the required findings in 11-70-5 of the Zoning Ordinance and upon a finding that:
1. 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
  2. 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
  3. The proposed signage incorporates special design features such as lighting, materials and craftsmanship, murals, or statuary that reinforce or are integrated with the building architecture.
- E. **Sign Permit Required.** A sign permit is required for the construction and placement of individual signs contained in an approved comprehensive sign plan.

- F. **Modification and Expiration of Approved Sign Plans.** An approved comprehensive sign plan expires in accordance with Section 11-67-9 of the Zoning Ordinance. If a plan expires, the sign allowance for the property is based on the provisions in Chapters 42 and 43 of this Sign Ordinance unless a new comprehensive sign plan is approved.