



## Planning and Zoning Board

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### *Case Information*

**CASE NUMBER:** **Z17-033 (PLN2017-00244)**  
**LOCATION/ADDRESS:** The 5600 through 5900 blocks of East Longbow Parkway (north side) and the 3100 through 3200 blocks of North Recker Road (west side).  
**GENERAL VICINITY:** Located south of the Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway.  
**REQUEST:** Council Use Permit  
**PURPOSE:** This request will allow installation of two multi-tenant Freeway Landmark Monument signs within a commercial center.  
**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** District 5  
**OWNER:** Dover Associates LLC & Longbow CAS, LLC  
**APPLICANT:** Stephen Earl; Earl, Curley & Lagarde, P.C.  
**STAFF PLANNER:** Tom Ellsworth

### **SITE DATA**

**PARCEL NUMBER:** 141-41-020 and 141-41-021  
**PARCEL SIZE:** 50± acres (acreage of the entire commercial center)  
**EXISTING ZONING:** LC-PAD  
**GENERAL PLAN Character area:** Mixed Use Activity District  
**CURRENT LAND USE:** Commercial Center

### **HISTORY/RELATED CASES**

**May 14, 1979:** Annexed into City (Ord. #1234)  
**August 8, 1979:** Rezoning from County R-43 to AG (Z79-109; Ord. #1272)  
**June 1, 1987:** Rezoned to M-1 (Z87-31; Ord. #2217)  
**March 4, 2002:** Acceptance of Development Master Plan for Longbow Business Park and Golf Club with conceptual BIZ overlay (Z02-01; Ord. #3972)  
**November 2, 2005:** Design Review Board approval of Design Guidelines, including the sign package, for the Longbow Business Park and Golf Club DMP (DR05-093)  
**January 17, 2006:** Zoning Administrator approved a Special Use Permit for the Comprehensive Sign Plan for the Longbow Business Park and Golf Club DMP (ZA06-02)  
**November 17, 2008:** Rezoned from M-1 to C-2 (Z08-063; Ord. #4897)  
**October 19, 2016:** Site Plan Review for a commercial center (Z16-050)

### **SITE CONTEXT**

**NORTH:** Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway  
**EAST:** (Across Recker) single residential development - zoned RS-9 PAD  
**SOUTH:** (Across Longbow) Vacant land - zoned LI PAD  
**WEST:** Sunshine Acres - zoned RS-90

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Approval with conditions  
**P&Z BOARD RECOMMENDATION:** ☒ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial  
**DR BOARD RECOMMENDATION:** ☒ Approval with conditions. ☐ Denial  
**WAIVER SIGNED:** ☒ Yes ☐ No

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION/REQUEST**

The applicant is requesting a Council Use Permit (CUP) to allow the development of two Freeway Landmark Monument (FLM) signs as part of the approved commercial center within the Longbow Business Park located at the southwest corner of Recker Road and the Loop 202 Red Mountain Freeway. The retail center encompasses 50± acres of the 313± acre Longbow Business Park. The center is zoned Limited Commercial (LC) with a PAD overlay for the Long Bow Development Master Plan.

The Longbow Business Park site has 2,640 ft. of frontage on the south side of the Loop 202 Freeway between the 56<sup>th</sup> street alignment on the west to Recker Road on the east. The applicant is proposing two 60'-high freeway landmark signs along this freeway frontage with an overall sign area of 545sf per sign. The signs are located on the west and east ends of the property and are separated by approximately 1,800 feet.

The applicant has completed a visual analysis of the height in order to provide photo simulations of the proposed FLM signs at 40', 50', 60', and 70' in height. Based on this analysis the applicant proposes the 60' height which was determined to allow drivers adequate sight distance to make the exit from the freeway. Staff was present with the applicant during the visual analysis and observed the tests at each height from various vantage points along the freeway. Staff is supportive of the requested 60' height.

The proposed sign is dual faced with colors, form and materials that draw on the architecture and signage within the center. Center ID and Tenant signage will be routed out copy with push-through letters. The form, texture, color, and finish incorporate representations complimentary to the primary architectural or natural features of the associated development.

The Design Review Board reviewed the project at a work study session on July 11, 2017. The Board was generally supportive of the design of the site. They did request the applicant modify the materials to use natural rusted steel rather than aluminum panels with a rusted paint finish. They also requested that the exposed support pole be designed to be more incorporated into the architecture of the sign. The Board also made general comments regarding the FLM guidelines themselves. The Board commented that they felt the guidelines were to restrictive and that FLM signs should have the ability to be larger. The applicant is preparing modifications to the design of the sign for the Design Review Board's final recommendation to the City Council.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD PARTICIPATION**

The applicant has completed a citizen participation plan which included a mailing to surrounding property owners within 1200' of the site and registered neighborhoods and HOA's within 1-mile. In addition, a neighborhood meeting was held on June 28, 2017 at the Longbow Golf Club located at 5601 East Longbow Parkway. The applicant has reported that the neighbors present were those whose houses back up to Recker Road. Most were not concerned with FLM signs being proposed. Questions related only to illumination associated with wall and center signage on the Recker Road frontage. Neighbors were present at the Design Review Board work session and expressed concerns regarding the need for the freeway signs and the height of the signs.

### **CONFORMANCE WITH THE MESA 2040 GENERAL PLAN**

The General Plan designation for this commercial center is "Mixed Use Activity Districts". Commercial centers are noted as a primary use in these districts. As such, the underlying use

is in compliance with the General Plan. The proposed sign is not a new “use” that can be reviewed for appropriateness, rather staff refers to the General Plan’s requirements for quality as the controlling element in the review of the proposed FLM sign. The recommendations of the Design Review Board and the Planning & Zoning Board will be considered as City Council establishes the FLM sign’s conformance with the General Plan.

## STAFF ANALYSIS

### FLM Guidelines and the General Plan:

In May of 2004 the City Council amended the Zoning Ordinance to establish the procedures for review of Freeway Landmark Monument signs through a Council Use Permit. Council also adopted Freeway Landmark Monument Guidelines intended to provide the criteria against which proposed FLM signs can be reviewed. In April 2006, revised and updated Freeway Landmark Monument Guidelines were approved by Council. After that, in 2014, the voters approved Mesa’s new General Plan. The FLM Guidelines state that a site requesting a freeway landmark sign must have a General Plan land use designation of Regional Commercial or Public/Semi Public. These land use designations were from the previous general plan. The current General Plan does not include the same Land Use designations as the previous plan. The development character of the site under the current General Plan is designated as Mixed-Use Activity District with a Regional subtype. The proposed site for the FLM signs meets the required General Plan designations.

### Analysis:

The site of the overall development for the proposed FLM signs has 2,640 ft. of frontage on the Loop 202 between the 56<sup>th</sup> street alignment on the west to the Recker Road on the east. The applicant is proposing two 60’-high freeway landmark signs along this freeway frontage. The signs are located on the west and east ends of the property and are separated by approximately 1,800 feet.

The west sign is located 20’ south of the freeway right of way and 600’ from the western property line. The eastern sign is also located 20’ south of the freeway right of way and is located directly behind the approved Sprouts and is approximately 400’ from the Recker Road right of way and 623’ to the nearest residential property.

Table 1 evaluates the proposed location and design of the sign against the Freeway Landmark Monument Guidelines, establishing that the applicant has met these standards.

**Table 1**

| <b>Guideline</b>  | <b>Proposal - Compliance with Guidelines</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>General Provisions</b>   |  |
| Limited to 1 FLM per development  | 2 FLM proposed –<br><b>Two Signs are Proposed due to length of freeway frontage and the extent of additional development planned that does not have freeway frontage</b> |
| Additional FLMs for one development may be considered only in the event that both the length of the adjacent freeway frontage exceeds two thousand feet (2000’) and the area of the development exceeds sixty acres (60 ac.). | <b>The freeway frontage exceeds 2,600 ft. Longbow Business Park and Golf Club is 313 acres</b>   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| No more than 3 FLMs in a 1 mile on same side of the freeway  | Complies   |
| Project name to be topmost visible portion of sign   | Project name is topmost visible portion of sign - <b>Yes</b>   |
| Project name $\geq$ 20% of sign area   | Project name is 22% of sign area - <b>Yes</b>  |
| Project name sign area $\geq$ individual tenant or store signs   | At 96 sf the project sign is greater than the 61.25 sf individual store signs - <b>Yes</b>   |
| <b>Location and Siting</b>   |  |
| Parcel or development of $\geq$ 30 acres adjacent to freeway and intersecting street   | Longbow Business Park is 313 acres - <b>Yes</b>  |
| General Plan designation of Regional Commercial or Public/Semi-Public  | When the General Plan was updated these designations were not carried forward. – <b>See Analysis.</b>                                |
| Distance of 2,000' from nearest existing / approved FLM on the same side of the freeway  | Proposed signs will be approximately 1800 ft. apart - <b>No</b>  |
| Distance of 10X total height (600') from existing residential  | Signs are setback the appropriate distance from the residential houses to the east and from Sunshine Acres on the west. - <b>Yes</b> |
| No greater than 200' from freeway Right of Way   | The FLM is proposed at 20' from the freeway - <b>Yes</b>   |
| <b>Design and Construction</b>   |  |
| No higher than necessary to be visible to vehicle on freeway, allowing sufficient time to exit                                     | The height test established the need for the 60' height - <b>Yes</b>   |
| Architecturally integrated with the associated development   | The proposed FLM incorporates colors and materials from the commercial center's architecture and signage - <b>Yes</b>                |
| Constructed of low-maintenance materials   | The finish materials are concrete board w/stucco and aluminum panels that are textured and painted - <b>Yes</b>                      |
| The horizontal dimension not to exceed 1/3 of the vertical dimension   | At 20' the horizontal dimension is 1/3 of the 60' height. - <b>Yes</b>   |
| 1 sf sign area per 2 lf of freeway frontage, capped at 750 sf of signage. (2,640 $\pm$ lf of frontage allows 660 sf for each sign) | Proposed sign area: 545 sf (each) - <b>Yes</b>   |
| Illumination of sign copy only   | Only push-through letters are illuminated - <b>Yes</b>   |
| Electronic Message Display (EMD) messages shall be displayed for a minimum of 1 hour   | An EMD is not proposed – <b>N/A</b>  |

The applicant is meeting all the FLM Guidelines except for the separation distance between signs. Because these are guidelines, and not ordinance requirements, the Planning and Zoning Board and City Council have some discretion in allowing modifications if they find the intent of the guidelines is met.

In considering modifications, the Board and Council should consider the quality of the sign, if the intent of the guidelines are being met, and if there are circumstances or characteristics of the site that would justify the proposed modifications.

The following modification is being requested:

Sign Separation

The guidelines states that signs should be located *"No closer than two thousand feet (2000') from an existing or approved Freeway Landmark Monument on the same side of the freeway."* The applicant is proposing the distance between signs to be approximately 1,800 ft. Staff is supportive of the reduced distance. The applicant has the required amount of freeway frontage for two signs and also has enough frontage to provide the required separations. However, the guidelines also require that the signs be located away from residential property at a distance 10 times the proposed height. In this instance that would be 600'. Staff feels that the reduced distance between signs is justified as it allows the applicant to more fully comply with the other FLM guidelines and that the distance requirements to residential properties should be given priority. The proposed FLM signs have been reviewed by the Design Review Board for quality of design, the modification proposed meet the intent of the guidelines.

Section 5 of the FLM Guidelines outlines the provisions for the consideration of modifications to the guidelines. The City Council may approve modifications or alternatives to these Guidelines when:

- A. The proposed Freeway Landmark Monument incorporates special design features or unique architectural elements that represent superior quality:

*The proposed FLM Guidelines have been reviewed by the Design Review Board for quality and architectural compatibility. The Design Review Board gave favorable comments at the July 11 work session. The proposed modification is meets this criteria for consideration.*

- B. Such modifications or alternatives are consistent with the intent of these Guidelines and will result in conditions that are commensurate with or superior to these Guidelines; and

*The proposed modification is consistent with the intent of the guidelines. The modification is for the separation between signs. The applicant has adequate freeway frontage to allow for the two signs. In order to meet the intent of the guidelines as it relates to height and setback distances from residentially zoned property the applicant needs to slightly adjust the distance between the two signs. The required distance would be 2,000' the applicant is requesting approximately 1,800'. The proposed modification is commensurate with the guidelines.*

C. One of the following is present:

1. An individualized assessment reveals the existence of extraordinary conditions involving topography, land ownership, adjacent development, parcel configuration, or other factors related to the development site; or

*The proposed site for the FLM signs is located along curved portion of a depressed freeway with landscaped berms. In order to meet the height requirements, form the guidelines the signs need to be 60' tall to be able to identify the center in enough time to exit the freeway. The site is also located in proximity to residentially zoned property. The site has adequate freeway frontage to allow for two FLM signs. The topography and site context justify a minor modification in the distance between signs to more fully comply with the intent of the guidelines.*

2. The proposed or existing development exhibits unique characteristics of land use, architectural style, site location, physical scale, historical interest or other distinguishing feature that represents a clear variation from conventional development; or

*This criteria does not apply to this site.*

3. The proposed site is designated Mixed Use/Employment by the Mesa General Plan Land Use Map and such property is located within two (2) miles of two (2) intersecting freeways.

*This criteria does not apply to this site.*

**CONCLUSION:**

Staff is supportive of the request for the two freeway landmark signs proposed in the Longbow Business Park along the south side of the Loop 202 freeway. The proposed signs meet all the Freeway Landmark Monument Sign Guidelines with one exception as described above. The proposed modification meets the justification requirements from Section 5 of the FLM Guidelines. The design of the proposed signs is compatible with the approved commercial center. Therefore, staff recommends approval of the Council Use Permit subject to the following conditions.

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:**

1. Compliance with the basic development of the Freeway Landmark Monument as described in the project narrative and as shown on the site plan except as noted below;
2. Compliance with all City development codes and regulations;
3. Compliance with all requirements of the Development Services Department with regards to the issuance of building and sign permits;
4. **Compliance with all conditions of Design Review recommendation DR17-029;**

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