

STAFF REPORT

June 7, 2012

No. 12PD019 - Major Amendment to a Planned Commercial Development to allow an electronic message center **ITEM 7**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

APPLICANT	Conrad's Big C Signs
PROPERTY OWNER	R&R Realty, LLC
REQUEST	No. 12PD019 - Major Amendment to a Planned Commercial Development to allow an electronic message center
EXISTING LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Lots 1 and 2 of Block 1 of Walpole Heights Subdivision, Formerly Tract C Revised and Lot AB1; Tract A Revised, less Lot H8; Tract D of Walpole Heights Subdivision; and, Lot AB, all located in Section 11, T1N, R7E, BHM, Rapid City, Pennington County, South Dakota
PARCEL ACREAGE	Approximately 9.62 acres
LOCATION	2707 Mount Rushmore Road
EXISTING ZONING	General Commercial District (Planned Development)
FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION	Commercial
SURROUNDING ZONING	
North:	Office Commercial District (Planned Development) - General Commercial District (Planned Development)
South:	Office Commercial District (Planned Development) - General Commercial District (Planned Development)
East:	General Commercial District
West:	Office Commercial District (Planned Development)
PUBLIC UTILITIES	Rapid City water and sewer
DATE OF APPLICATION	5/8/2012
REVIEWED BY	Robert Laroco / Nicole Lecy

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Major Amendment to a Planned Commercial Development to allow an electronic message center be denied.

GENERAL COMMENTS: The applicant has submitted a request for a Major Amendment to the Planned Commercial Development to allow an electronic reader board to be included with the approved sign package. In particular, the applicant is requesting to remove two existing

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illuminated signs and replace them with one electronic reader board. On June 7, 2007 a Major Amendment to a Planned Commercial Development was approved with stipulations which addressed signage and landscaping concerns resulting from a recent platting procedure. In particular, the associated platting procedure (File #07PL068) would create two off-premise signs on the subject property. The off-premise signage was removed in compliance with the requirements of the Major Amendment to the Planned Commercial Development.

The property is located at 2707 Mount Rushmore Road at the northwestern intersection of Mount Rushmore Road and Fairmont Boulevard. The property is the location of Riddle's Jewelry.

STAFF REVIEW: Staff has reviewed the request to allow an electronic message center in a Planned Commercial Development and has noted the following considerations:

Design: The proposed electronic reader board measures 6 feet 8 inches tall by 7 feet 9 inches wide, totaling 53.72 square feet of signage. The message center will replace two existing illuminated cabinet signs with a cumulative square footage of approximately 77 square feet of signage. An existing 121 square foot sign is located on a 36 foot tall pole and will not be moved or altered. The addition of the electronic reader board in lieu of the two existing signs will result in an overall decrease in the square footage of signage by 22.28 square feet. The proposed electronic reader board is a 20 millimeter full color board. The applicant has not indicated if the proposed message center will display a static or a moving advertisement, however, they have indicated the board will display on-premise advertising only, and will display the time and temperature as required by the Rapid City Sign Code. The sign is located approximately 42.80 feet from Mount Rushmore Road right-of-way, and 20 feet from the Fairmont Boulevard right-of-way, outside of all sight triangles. The addition of the proposed electronic reader board will not impact the natural drainage of the site. The proposed sign is in compliance with the Rapid City Sign Code.

Criteria for Review: The requested Major Amendment to the Planned Commercial Development has been reviewed per the regulations of Chapter 17.50.050.F.5 of the Rapid City Municipal Code and staff has noted the following considerations:

a. There are certain conditions pertaining to the particular piece of property in question because of its size, shape, or topography;

The property is located at 2707 Mount Rushmore Road. The previously approved Planned Development allows a mix of commercial uses including a jewelry manufacturer, restaurant, and hotel. The size, shape, or topography of the property does not appear to create particular conditions limiting the development of the property. The proposed electronic reader board will be an addition to an existing sign.

b. The application of these regulations to this particular piece of property would create a practical difficulty or undue hardship;

The Mount Rushmore Road corridor is a principal arterial street on the City's Major Street

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Plan. It is anticipated that principal arterial streets carry the highest traffic volumes in the City. In addition, Mount Rushmore Road serves as the primary gateway to Mount Rushmore and the Black Hills. The increasing use of electronic signage in the Mount Rushmore Road Corridor may create distractions to travelers on the road. An electronic reader board showing on-premise advertising is a permitted use in a General Commercial District located outside of a Planned Development. However, the property is located within a Planned Commercial Development which allows the City to review additional criteria to establish the appropriateness of use(s) within the district. In particular, the criteria for review cite adverse impacts that may be created as a determination for the appropriateness of the use. The City's Sign Code would still allow for additional wall signage and ground signage without the addition of electronic signage. The application of the regulations for this particular property does not create undue hardship.

c. Exceptions to the underlying zoning district, if granted, would not cause undue hardship to the public good or impair the purposes and intent of these regulations;

As previously noted, the City's Sign Regulations allows electronic reader board signs within the General Commercial District. Due to the potential safety concerns associated with the distractions created by electronic reader board signs and the aesthetic impact of this design of sign, the Planning Commission has directed staff to allow the Commission to determine the appropriateness of an electronic reader board sign when located within a Planned Development and/or if proposed as a part of a Conditional Use Permit. This proposed electronic reader board sign is located directly adjacent to Mount Rushmore Road, a principal arterial street on the City's adopted Major Street Plan.

Transportation Planning staff has noted that Mount Rushmore Road is a high pedestrian/bicycle crash corridor. The Mount Rushmore Road Corridor study notes that computerized electronic billboards are receiving greater use, but present significant problems, including neighborhood impacts, conflicts with traffic signals, and a distraction to motorists by holding their attention longer than conventional signs. The Mount Rushmore Road Corridor Study goes on to identify best practices for the implementation of signage along the transportation corridor. Specifically, the study states that the placement and use of electronic billboards, especially video billboards, should be prohibited.

d. A literal interpretation of this chapter would deprive the applicant of rights that others in the same district are allowed;

The City's Sign Regulations allows electronic reader board signs within the General Commercial District. However, the property is located within a Planned Commercial Development which allows the City to review additional criteria to establish the appropriateness of use(s) within the district. In particular, the criteria for review cite adverse impacts that may be created as a determination for the appropriateness of the use. Due to the potential safety concerns associated with the distractions created by electronic reader board signs and the aesthetic impact of this design of sign, the Planning Commission has directed staff to allow the Commission to determine the appropriateness of an electronic reader board sign when located within a Planned Development and/or if proposed as a part of a Conditional Use Permit.

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e. Any adverse impacts will be reasonably mitigated;

The Planned Development must serve as the tool by which the adverse impacts of the Planned Development are mitigated. The Planning Commission has denied similar requests by applicants representing Furniture Row and Cabela's (File #07PD049 and #07PD071, respectively) on Interstate 90 due to concerns regarding distractions on a high speed multi-lane roadway. However, requests for electronic signage have been approved with stipulations for the Speedwash located on Cambell Street as well as National American University on U.S. Highway 16 (File #10PD006 and #12UR013 respectively). It should be noted that National American University is separated from U.S. Highway 16 by a service road, whereas the proposed electronic reader board for this property is located adjacent to Mount Rushmore Road. Mount Rushmore Road serves as the primary gateway between Rapid City and Mount Rushmore. Staff has noted that the intersection of Mount Rushmore Road and Fairmont Boulevard is highly congested, and lacks adequate pedestrian access. Blinking or scrolling signage can create a distraction for travelers using the street. As such, staff cannot support the request to allow an electronic reader board to be permitted as a part of the approved sign package for this Planned Commercial Development.

f. The requested exception to the underlying zoning district standards is an alternative or innovative practice that achieves the objective of the existing standard sought to be modified;

The requested electronic reader board is an alternative to marquee-type reader boards, bill boards, and other types of signage. However, the practice of moving, scrolling, and flashing advertising on electronic reader boards can have a negative impact on public welfare. The intent of the Planned Development is to permit greater flexibility and promote development that is more economically efficient while being compatible with adjacent land uses than would otherwise normally be allowed by the underlying zoning district. The requested sign is located on property adjacent to a major transportation corridor suitable for commercial development. However, the use of electronic signage may have adverse affects along the corridor by creating potential distractions to travelers on Mount Rushmore Road.

Notification Requirements: The required sign has been posted on the property. The white receipts required as proof of the certified mailing have been returned to Community Planning and Development Services. The green cards required as proof of the certified mailing have not been returned. Staff will inform the Planning Commission at the June 7, 2012 Planning Commission meeting if this requirement has not been met. As of this writing, there have been no inquiries into this request.