

**City of Findlay**  
**Design Review Board**  
**Third Floor Conference Room, Municipal Building**  
**Wednesday, March 13, 2024 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Minutes**

Members Present:

Heather Clow  
Tim Mayle  
Meredith Wirth  
Eric Van Renterghem  
Jeff Fort

Members Absent:

Brian Hurt  
Jordyn Taylor

Staff Attending:

Matt Cordonnier, HRPC Director  
Laura Ewing, HRPC Staff

**CALL TO ORDER**

Matt Cordonnier called meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**ROLL CALL**

The following members were present: Heather Clow, Jeff Fort, Tim Mayle, Meredith Wirth and Eric Van Renterghem.

1. Petition for Certificate of Appropriateness #CA-05-2024 filed by Key Ads for Camelot Shire to install a new billboard at 115 Center Street.

GENERAL

The subject property is located at 115 Center St.

PROPOSAL

- The applicant wishes to install a new static billboard on the behind a current billboard at the corner of Main St & Center St. The new billboard will measure 12' x 25'.

STAFF ANALYSIS

- The proposal is appropriate.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

HRPC Staff recommends approval of CA-05-2024 at 115 Center St

Stephen Keys, applicant, was in attendance. Cordonnier explained that this was applied for at zoning and approved by zoning before the January 19, 2024 zoning code changes. Mayle asked who approved it. Cordonnier stated that the City of Findlay Zoning approved it.

Keys explained that they purchased the Lammers outdoor advertising company in 2019. At that time there was a building at the back of the structure. Now there is no building and the back side is bare. He does not want to make a digital investment since a building or trees could block it in the future.

Mayle asked Cordonnier how can DDR (Downtown Design Review) be asked how to approve a blank canvas for aesthetics when we don't know what will be advertised. Cordonnier explained that when zoning approves a building, DDR can approve what it looks like, but is not approving the building is allowed to be built. Mayle asked how to judge a blank pallet when the pallet may be put up with stuff that doesn't fit in with the code. Fort stated that we are not seeing what it will be, only what is there now. Cordonnier stated that DDR can state what the presentation will look like.

Keys showed an example the billboard panel that would be used. The example he used was the north side of the building located at 109 S. Main St.

Mayle stated that DDR scrutinizes projects and adheres to the code. He continued that DDR is being asked to approve something that they will not know what it will look like month by month. Mayle asked what role the DDR plays in this type of project. Cordonnier stated that in many ways, the city approves a sign, and DDR doesn't say if there can be a sign, but what it looks like. He also stated that code states a billboard is permitted. Mayle stated that in that instance then when a sign was discussed at the Jim Heck building they could have said it's a billboard, instead of a sign, and then they could have installed whatever they wanted. Fort stated there will be a metal frame with a light, and that's all we can approve. Mayle asked, "philosophically", could a potential applicant say a sign is a billboard. Cordonnier stated that his response would say a billboard is not permitted there. He explained that the approval of billboards is based on how close you are to other billboards and residential areas. The distance was increased by 5 times in the new code with the idea that there are very few places that billboards can be added in the city. There may be a few applications submitted before the zoning change occurred, but there will be very few new billboards in the city.

Fort stated that if, for example, a billboard application had a frame that had LED lights that flashed, then that's within the DDR purview to approve or deny. VanRenterghem stated that an image of what was planned would help. Mayle stated that anything could be put on that sign that DDR would never approve. Key explained that this is a family company with a lot of restrictions. Cordonnier stated that the billboard frame and lighting are what is approved, and that the canvas will inherently change. He explained that if the City of Findlay approves a carwash, DDR says can't say that the building cannot wash cars. Mayle views this as similar to a sign, which dictates lots of discussion. Keys explained there are different codes for signs versus billboards. Mayle asked that, philosophically, if there was a building, prior to changes, could they have said a whole wall is a billboard and anything can be placed on it. Fort explained that

the sign attached to a nearby building has a design, height, color and lighting.

VanRhenten asked why its at the DDR. Cordonnier stated that DDR approves the pole, the frame and the light.

Fort moved to approve the request to put a billboard on the back of the existing sign, designed to look like the billboard on the north side of the building at 109 S. Main St, with light shing up from the bottom, seconded by Clow. Mayle asked about future projects when people are frustrated with the DDR outcome or discussions and start calling signs billboards. Cordonnier stated that he will ask “where is the billboard permit”. Mayle asked what the distinction is between a sign or billboard. Cordonnier stated that a billboard permit would be required. Clow asked if zoning tells us if it’s a billboard. Cordonnier stated that yes, zoning dictates if it’s a billboard. Mayle stated that he’s trying to understand why we have a say over the small sign compared to the large billboard. Cordonnier asked Keys if there is anything small that can be done to the existing billboard poles, like cladding or paint it black to hide the I beams. Keys stated maybe. Cordonnier asked about the pipes standing out on the top.

Mayle asked if the light is from the top or the bottom. Keys stated it will be from the bottom. The lighting on the billboard used as an example at the 109 S. Main St building is on top to prevent interference at the parking area. Mayle asked Keys why the billboard being proposed is static instead of digital. Keys stated that he didn’t want to make a digital investment since a building or trees could block it in the future. Cordonnier asked if the frame could be black. Keys would like to keep it the same color as all the others. Mayle asked if the permit came in after January 19, 2024 would we still be hearing it. Keys said, this one yes because he can have two on that spot.

All voted members voted “yes”, the motion was approved.

2. Petition for Certificate of Appropriateness #CA-06-2024 filed by Toledo Sign Co. for RCO Law to add lettering to the awning at 337 S Main St.

#### GENERAL

The subject property is located at 337 S Main St.

#### PROPOSAL

- The applicant wishes to add illuminated channel letters on two sides of an existing overhang. The letters are aluminum, with plastic faces, vinyl overlay for faces and is LED illuminated. The sign measures in total for both sides at 16.8 ft<sup>2</sup>. The allowable space for this area is 60 square feet, 40 of which are available.

#### STAFF ANALYSIS

- The proposal is using an appropriate style, color and size for the sign.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

HRPC Staff recommends approval of CA-06-2024 at 337 S Main St

Cordonnier explained that the large Fifth Third sign is part of the south facing façade. The small signage and sides of the awning are on the west facing wall. Cordonnier stated that is a pedestrian area. Toledo Sign Co, in attendance, explained the style of letters and will be tying into the existing electric. Cordonnier asked if the lighting can be dimmed. Toledo Co stated that it is not set up that way, but it will be no different than other signs. Cordonnier explained that the Loan Depot sign was very bright and people complained about it. Toledo Co stated that it will be shining through vinyl and would not be extremely bright. Fort asked if there is a specification for lumens allowed. Cordonnier stated no, but there is something for aesthetics. Toledo Co. stated that the lighting could be adjusted later if there was an issue with it. Mayle stated that the board is subjective. Clow asked if it could match the fifth third sign. Mayle asked if the building owner is ok with it. Toledo Co stated they do have owner approval. Cordonnier stated the intensity of the light is part of the aesthetics and suggested approval of installation allowing for adjustment to the intensity of the light. Mayle suggested having standards in the code for the future. Cordonnier stated that light intensity standards is tough. Fort motioned to approve the sign with the condition of potentially adjusting the light, second by Mayle. All members voted “yes” the motion was approved.

Mayle asked what the process is the make an update in the code for lighting. Cordonnier stated that he biggest update for the latest change was the sign size addition. Fort stated there should be some kind of way to have a standard for lighting. Mayle asked if there is a standard for digital billboards. Cor stated there is a standard for digital billboards.

3. Petition for Certificate of Appropriateness #CA-07-2024 filed by Gabrielle Faulkner for Mon Coeur Bakery to add an awning with lettering at 208 E. Sandusky St.

#### GENERAL

The subject property is located at 208 E Sandusky St.

#### PROPOSAL

- The applicant wishes to install a black awning with and gray heat transferred vinyl graphics. The awning will measure 6’ 8” x 21’ 9”. The sign will measure at 52 ft<sup>2</sup>. The allowed sign space for that building is 35 ft<sup>2</sup>.

#### STAFF ANALYSIS

- The proposal is using an appropriate color and style, but the sign is too large for the building.

#### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

HRPC Staff recommends denial

Gabrielle Faulkner, applicant, stated the Renz is going to paint the front of the building, so the colors will look different than what was presented. Cordonnier stated that the painting will need to be approved by DDR. She explained that the look will be more upscale dining with a

baby grand near the entrance.

Fort moved to approve the awning. Cordonnier stated that the building is narrow and the sign is larger than the permitted use. Faulkner stated that the sign is already made. She presented a new graphic with the measurements for each graphic which measured at 30 square feet. Mayle asked if there is an awning there now. Cordonnier stated there is not one there now and that with the lettering measured out individually it is within the sign size regulation for that building facade. Mayle asked about the logo decal on the door. Cordonnier asked if it was on the outside of the glass or inside the building. Faulkner stated that it is inside the building. Cordonnier explained that since it is inside the building the decal does not add into the measurement restrictions.

Mayle motioned to approve the awning and sign as presented as it is not outside our sign measurements, seconded by Eric. All members voted "yes", motion approved.

The meeting was adjourned.