

Design Review Board Case # 20-0003
Blocks 4&5 – Carlyle Crossing Coordinated Sign Plan

Application	General Data	
Project Name: Carlyle Crossing Coordinated Sign Plan Special Use Permit Location: Blocks 4 & 5 – Eisenhower East 2410 and 2460 Mill Road Applicant: HTC 4/5 Project Owner LLC	DRB Date:	December 17, 2020
	Site Area:	5.07 acres
	Zone:	CDD #2
	Proposed Use:	Residential, Retail, Parking
	Gross Floor Area:	1,021,711 sf
Purpose of Application: DRB review and approval of a Coordinated Sign Plan for the Carlyle Crossing mixed-use project. The plan proposes a program of design guidelines, principles, and regulations for signage to include street- and upper-level retail signage, residential identity signage, and other site signage.		
Staff Reviewers: Robert M. Kerns, AICP robert.kerns@alexandriava.gov Thomas H. Canfield, AIA tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Nathan Imm nathan.imm@alexandriava.gov Carson Lucarelli carson.lucarelli@alexandriava.gov Bill Cook william.cook@alexandriava.gov		
DRB ACTION FOR FEBRUARY 25, 2021 WORK SESSION - SUMMARY: The item was DEFERRED until February 25, 2021 at the request of the Applicant.		

DRB Approval Process

The Carlyle/Eisenhower East Design Review Board (DRB) is charged with reviewing applications within CDDs #2 (Eisenhower Avenue Metro), #11 (South Carlyle), and #1 (Duke Street) for development in those areas which requires a Special Use Permit (SUP). The applicant is requesting DRB approval of a Coordinated Sign Plan SUP (CSP-SUP) currently scheduled for public hearings by Planning Commission and City Council in April 2021.

DRB review of signage matters has been infrequent in recent years. In the Carlyle area, DRB review of signage was required by certain elements of the Carlyle Design Guidelines and Carlyle Coordinated Sign Plan. The sign plan was amended in 2008, which allowed greater flexibility and more ability for staff to administratively review signage.

Throughout the City, Coordinated Sign Plans are often reviewed concurrently with Development Special Use Permits, with development conditions that permit staff and the applicant to resolve design specifics closer to construction of the project. The applicant for the Carlyle Crossing project, in consultation with staff, elected to submit an application for a Coordinated Sign Plan SUP separately from the DSUP. This allowed the applicant and staff time to focus on the complex construction phasing and scheduling of the site plan and structures, and to allow time to devise a sign plan for a project of a scale which has no precedent in the city.

Carlyle Crossing Project Background

The Carlyle Crossing project, then known as Hoffman Blocks 4 & 5, was recommended for approval by the DRB in January 2018. Various aspects of the project had been presented to the Board at five (5) other meetings throughout 2017. The DSUP application (DSUP#2017-0023) for the project was approved by the Planning Commission and City Council in March 2018.

In the summer of 2019, the applicant made height and footprint modifications to the West Tower of the project, necessitated by a program change from condominium to multifamily rental. The DRB reviewed and approved these changes in June 2019, which were subsequently approved by Planning Commission and City Council in July 2019 (DSUP#2019-0018). As a condition of DSUP approval, the DRB was authorized to approve the final architecture of the West Tower building, and did so on July 18, 2019. The buildings are well under construction, with completion and occupancy expected in late 2021.

Staff notes a Coordinated Sign Plan SUP was approved in 1997 for the overall Hoffman site. At that time Blocks 4 & 5 were used for parking. The Hoffman Coordinated Sign Plan provided a signage plan serving the movie theatre and the retail spaces on Block 6B. It incorporated wall signs and hanging signs, a coordinated street sign system, and freestanding signs (both pole and ground mounted). The freestanding signs were planned in nine (9) locations to identify major tenants and give direction to tenants and parking. Some signs from the Hoffman plan exist, but the proposed Carlyle Crossing Coordinated Sign Plan largely supersedes the Hoffman plan.

Zoning & Master Plan Designation

Section 9-103(C) of the Zoning Ordinance permits a Coordinated Sign Plan with Special Use Permit approval for sites within specific zones or over a minimum size. The applicant must develop a Coordinated Sign Plan for consideration by City Council which establishes the time, manner, and placement of signs and establishes the design parameters for all proposed signs. City Council may then approve the Coordinated Sign Plan if the proposal, “provides the same or greater benefits to the public as the sign regulations otherwise applicable.”

Carlyle Crossing is zoned CDD#2 and is located within the boundaries of the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan. With regard to signage, conditions of CDD#2 are general in nature, calling for “variety and creativity of design,” but also directing that signage and storefront design should highlight the identity of individual business tenants, and that signage should be coordinated with the building design and include integration with any proposed awnings, canopies, etc.

CDD #2 Signage Conditions

- #161 - Design business and identification signs to relate in material, color and scale to the building on which the sign is displayed to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z.
 - a. The business and identification signs shall be designed of high quality materials and sign messages shall be limited to logos and names.
 - b. Installation of building mounted signage shall not damage the building and signage shall comply with all applicable codes and ordinances. (P&Z)
- #162 - Internally illuminated box signs are prohibited. Explore the use of exterior illumination. (P&Z)
- #163 - A freestanding monument or identification sign shall be prohibited. (P&Z)
- #164 - Install a temporary informational sign on the site prior to the approval of the final site plan for the project. The sign shall be displayed until construction is complete or replaced with a contractor or real estate sign incorporating the required information; the sign shall notify the public of the nature of the upcoming project and shall provide a phone number for public questions regarding the project. * (P&Z)(T&ES)

Signage Conditions from DSUP2017-0015 (Block 6A).

- #20 - Per Condition #5 of Coordinated Sign Plan SUP #1997-0163, a ratio of 1.5 square foot of sign for each 1.0 foot of building length shall be permitted for retail shops and restaurants only.
- 21. All new building signs shall be designed to relate in material, color and scale to the building and the tenant bay on which the sign is displayed to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z
 - a. Building signs shall be designed of high quality materials.
 - b. Installation of building mounted signage shall not damage the building and signage shall comply with all applicable codes and ordinances. (P&Z)
- 22. For ground floor uses, generally provide transparent windows for a minimum of 70% of the retail area. Flexibility may be considered based on creativity and the overall compatibility and character of the storefront design, to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z.
- 23. Internally illuminated box signs are prohibited. Any illuminated signs shall be halo lit signs. (P&Z)
- 24. Provide all traffic and pedestrian signage to the satisfaction of the Director of T&ES. (DSUP 2000-0028, Condition 62)

Signage Conditions from DSUP#2019-0018 (Blocks 4 & 5)

- #5- Install a temporary informational sign as required by Section 11-303(D) of the Zoning Ordinance on the site prior to the approval of the Final Site Plan for the project. The sign shall be displayed until construction is complete or replaced with a temporary sign incorporating the required information; the sign shall notify the public of the nature of the upcoming project and shall provide a phone number for public questions regarding the project. * (P&Z)(T&ES)

- #6- The Applicant shall submit a coordinated sign plan SUP at a future date. The plan shall include a color palette and shall coordinate the location, scale, number, massing, character and encroachment considerations of all proposed signage to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z and shall be approved by City Council prior to the release of the Final Site Plan.*
 - a. Design and develop a sign plan for interpretive signage that highlights the history and archaeology of the site. The plan shall be included as part of the Final Site Plan and shall coordinate the location, scale, massing and character of all proposed signage to the satisfaction of the Director of Archaeology. * (Arch)
 - b. Design and develop a sign plan for wayfinding and directional signage. The plan shall be included as part of the Final Site Plan and shall coordinate the location, scale, massing and character of all proposed signage to the satisfaction of the Director of T&ES. Installation of building mounted signage shall not damage the building and signage shall comply with all applicable codes and ordinances * (T&ES)
 - c. The building signs shall be designed to relate in material, color and scale to the building and the tenant bay on which the sign is displayed to the satisfaction of the Director of P&Z.
 - d. The building signs shall be designed of high quality materials.
 - e. Installation of building mounted signage shall not damage the building and signage shall comply with all applicable codes and ordinances. (P&Z)
 - f. Internally illuminated box signs are prohibited. Explore the use of exterior illumination. (P&Z)

- #7- Provide signage at the entrances to the parking garage with retail parking that is consistent with the City's Wayfinding standards for identifying parking garages. *(T&ES)

Eisenhower East Small Area Plan, Eisenhower East Design Guidelines

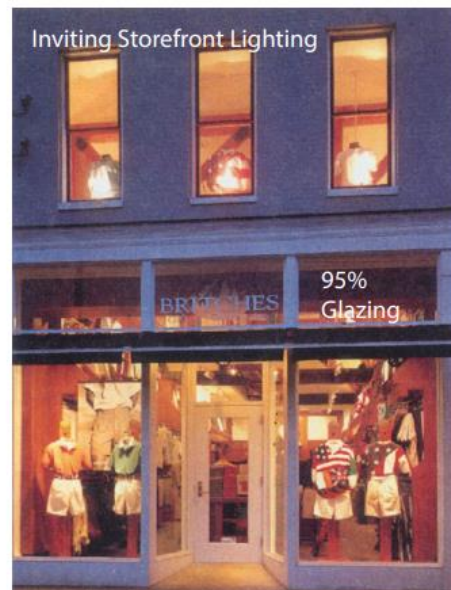
The proposed project is located within the Eisenhower East Small Area Plan. The Plan calls for a variety of retail uses that meet the needs of residents, employees, and visitors. It also calls for signage to be utilized within a placemaking context and to be free and visible. The Eisenhower East Design Guidelines provide more specific direction on signage, as depicted in the graphic.

They encourage frosting retail storefront glass, awnings, canopies and covered walkways, along with minimum floor to ceiling heights.

The Eisenhower East Design Guidelines reiterate general principles for retail expression and add a few specific guidelines pertaining to retail itself:

- Diverse and individualized storefronts with varied materials, signage, lighting, and awnings
- Retail tenant signs shall be designed of high-quality materials as an integral part of the building and related in materials, color and scale to the remainder of the building
- Parapet and wall signs shall be limited to the first-floor level
- Box signs are prohibited
- Storefront window signage is allowed up to 20% of the glass surface area
- No permanent free-standing signs, with the exception of traffic and directional signage, shall be allowed.

RETAIL
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronounced entryways, with canopies where appropriate• Awnings/covered walkways• Protruding/recessed bays• Outdoor seating for restaurants/cafes• Street furniture<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Benches- Planters/flower boxes• Individualized storefronts/signage• 15' minimum floor-to-ceiling height• 75-95% glazing on retail storefronts* 20-40- retail bay spacing



Applicant Proposal

The Applicant is requesting approval of a Coordinated Sign Plan SUP for 8,963 square feet of signage for Blocks 4 & 5, Carlyle Crossing. An additional SUP is also required, as the proposal includes more than one (1) sign above 35-feet, which is the maximum allowable as per Section 9-104(10)(A). 6,784 square feet of signage above 35-feet is requested, which is inclusive of two (2) skyline signs – as opposed to the required one (1) – totaling 1,025 square feet. The request twice exceeds the maximum allowable square footage and the signage itself is distributed throughout the ground, 3rd floor and skyline levels. The proposal is also accompanied by an encroachment application for the two projecting signs located along Stovall Street. The signs themselves total 1,070 square feet and are also located above 35-feet.

Staff Analysis & Recommendations

The requested signage is in generally agreeable locations between existing architectural elements and the proportions along the retail-base are reasonable. The garage and blade signage, which the DRB has previously seen, are also acceptably located and sized. Signage proposed at the retail level-3 are also in agreeable locations, however there is concern over the total volume of signage proposed above the maximum allowable height, which totals 6,784 square feet.

<u>Signage Above 35'</u>			
Elevation	Level-3 Retail	Skyline	Projecting
Eastern	372 Square feet	N/A	N/A
Western	2,215 Square feet	N/A	1,070 Square feet
Northern	N/A	514 Square feet	N/A
Southern	1,680 Square feet	511 Square feet	N/A
Plaza East	210 Square feet	N/A	N/A
Plaza West	212 Square feet	N/A	N/A

Total Signage Above 35-Feet = 6,784 Square Feet
--

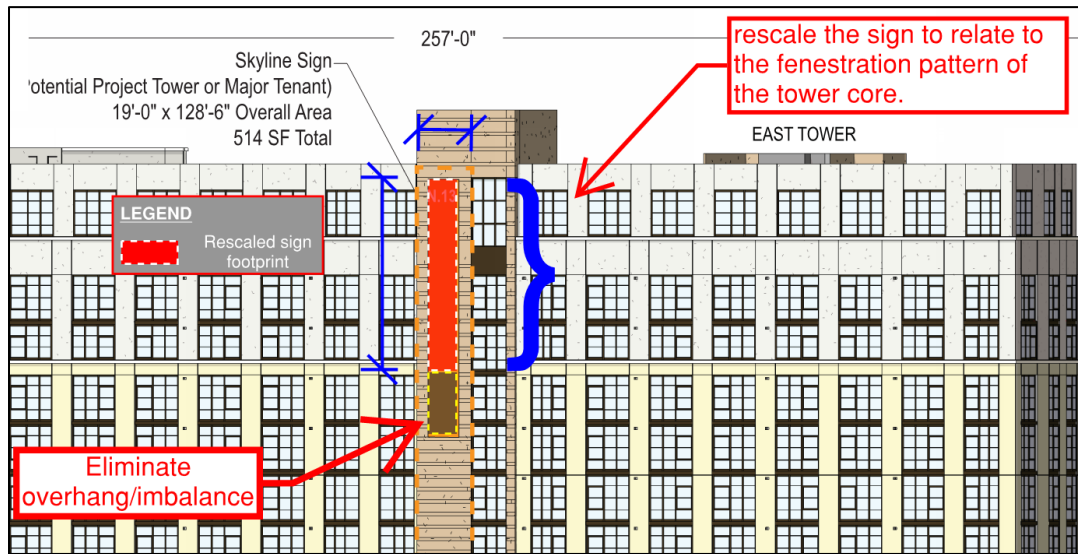
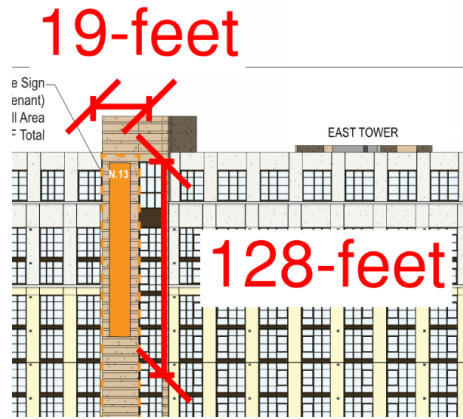
- i. Ground Level Signage*
 The Applicant proposes 1,577 square feet of retail, residential and parking garage related signage along the first-floor level, below 35-feet in height. The Applicant is requesting a ratio of 1.5 square feet per to 1 linear square feet of frontage, instead of the ordinance required 1:1. Given the size and scale of the development, Staff find that the signage proposed at these location to be generally acceptable. Blade signage is proposed at the pedestrian scale and is also found to appropriately located and sized.

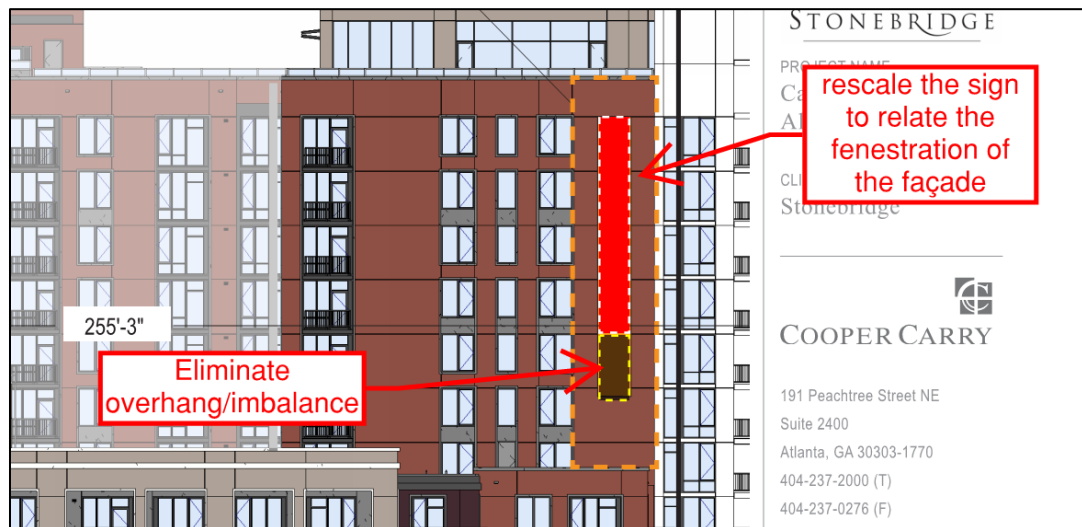
- ii. Level-3 Retail and Projecting Signage*
 The Applicant is proposing 6,784 square feet of signage above 35-feet, primarily at the third retail level, at a requested ratio of 2:1. This figure is inclusive of two projecting signs on Stovall Street totaling 1,070 square feet and is the reason for the aforementioned encroachment application. Staff find that the volume and requested ratios to be generally excessive and beyond the purpose and intent of the Sign Ordinance and Small Area Plan.

iii. Skyline Signage.

The Applicant is requesting approval of two skyline signs totaling 1,025 square feet at a requested ratio of 2:1. They are proposed along the southern and northern elevations and reserved for either the project name or major tenant. The size and scale, roughly twice the sign of a tractor trailer, are difficult to support and staff has encouraged the applicant to consider a scale which is more responsive to the architectural elements of the building.

Given the requested scaling of the signage and lettering, Staff find that the skyline signs will appear more like advertisements, rather than a marquee for the building. Additionally, there is concern that at the requested height of approximately 200-feet, the north facing skyline sign would be visible from the Masonic Temple.





Conclusion

Staff is encouraging discussion of the requested ratios for all levels of the building as well as the total proposed volume (square footage) to better inform the City’s ultimate recommendation to City Council and the Planning Commission in April. While the general placement of the signage is agreeable, the volume above 35-feet and at the retail level-3, reads in excess. Staff is encouraging the DRB to also consider the same criteria for the projecting signage along Stovall and the proposed skyline signs.

Attachment 1: Eisenhower East Block Map

Eisenhower East / Carlyle Blocks

SITE

