



# Architectural Review Board Report

---

---

**Architectural Review Board Meeting: January 19, 2021**

**Agenda Item: 7.1**

To: Architectural Review Board  
From: James Combs, Associate Planner, ARB Liaison  
Cc: Stephanie Reich, AIA, LEED AP, Design & Historic Preservation Planner  
Subject: 19ARB-0054 to modify an existing sign program to allow a sign adjustment for an upper level sign at an existing medical office use.  
Address: 1260 15<sup>th</sup> Street  
Applicant: Mahyar Mansouri, ZDX Industries, Inc.

## **Recommended Action**

It is recommended that the Architectural Review Board deny ARB application 19ARB-0054 based upon the analysis provided within this report.

## **Executive Summary**

Proposed is a modification of an existing sign program to allow a 54 square foot upper level sign at the fifth floor (55 feet above grade) of an existing building along Arizona Avenue in addition to the 170 square feet of signs previously approved for the 15<sup>th</sup> Street elevation. The requested has been modified from the previous meeting to have a reduced square footage, to be shifted from the rooftop to the fifth floor and has been relocated from 15<sup>th</sup> Street to Arizona Avenue.

## **Background**

- 19ARB-0149: At the October 21, 2019 Architectural Review Board meeting the applicant requested an upper level sign identical to the one included in 18ARB-0335. The Board was unable to make the findings to approve the sign adjustment and the item was continued. See attached staff report.
- 18ARB-0335: At the October 1, 2018 Architectural Review Board meeting a sign program was approved for multiple wall signs, an address sign, and a monument sign. At the same hearing the request for an upper-level sign was denied without prejudice, leaving open the possibility of a future resubmittal.

## **Project / Site Information**

The subject property is located at the northwest corner of Arizona Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street and consists of a high-rise medical office building with an attached four-story parking structure to the north. Vehicular access to the parking structure is from 15<sup>th</sup> Street with an exit onto the alley, pedestrian entrances are provided along both street frontages.

Surrounding uses include hospital, medical office, personal services and multi-unit residential.

### **Analysis**

Proposed is an upper-level sign as an addition to an existing sign program. The existing medical office building is located within the Healthcare Mixed-Use Zoning District (HMU) and is primarily surrounded with other healthcare uses.

The previous proposal included sign adjustment requests to allow more than two-thirds of the sign area on a single street frontage and a single sign greater than 100 SF. The applicant has modified the proposed sign size and location so only the request for an upper-level sign remains. The subject application was submitted under the previous Sign Code so no sign adjustment is required for letter heights exceeding 18 inches.

The request for an upper-level sign at this location has been reviewed by the Board twice. The first request (18ARB-0335) was denied and a new application (19ARB-0054) was submitted several months later. During the most recent review the applicant stated that the proposed sign was necessary as a wayfinding measure to direct patients to the nearby hospital and emergency room. The Board was unable to agree on whether an upper-level sign accomplished the applicant's wayfinding goals and recommended exploring alternative strategies while voting to continue the item.

Although the applicant has reduced the scope of the sign adjustment request, no additional justification has been provided for how the findings for the sign adjustment can be made. Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board deny the request for a sign adjustment to allow an upper-level sign based on the following findings:

1. The strict application of the provisions of this Chapter do not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships for the business or property owner which would be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter and which would arise from unique physical or topographic circumstances or conditions of project design. The subject building is developed on a flat, rectangular lot with two street frontages (Arizona Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street) providing ample sign area and opportunities for unobstructed sign visibility from the street.
2. The granting of the requested variance constitutes a grant of special privilege inconsistent with limitations imposed on similarly zoned properties or inconsistent with the purposes of the zoning regulations. The existing medical office building is located within the HMU zoning district which is specifically intended to provide to accommodate hospitals and related healthcare facilities. Within a zone designed to accommodate the unique requirements of the subject use and with numerous medical facilities within the immediate area being held to the same sign regulations, approval of a prohibited upper-level sign would constitute a special privilege inconsistent with the goals of the HMU zone and the Sign Code.
3. The granting of the requested variance is incompatible with other nearby signs, other elements of street and site furniture and with adjacent structures. Compatibility shall

be determined by the relationships of the elements of form, proportion, scale, color, materials, surface treatment, overall sign size and the size and style of lettering. There do not appear to be any permitted upper-level signs in the immediate area as shown by the applicant's city-wide survey (included as part of the October 7, 2019 Staff Report) and Staff's analysis of nearby sign permits. As the first upper level sign in the area the proposed upper-level sign would be incompatible with surrounding signs and the overall character of adjacent structures.

4. The granting of the variance would not be inconsistent with the purposes of this Chapter. The proposed upper-level sign is identified as a prohibited sign type by Chapter 9.61 and goes beyond what is necessary for the identification and advertisement of the subject business. As proposed, approximately 55 feet above the street level the sign would be significantly more visible than surrounding signs and would detract from views of surrounding structures and open space.

<b>SIGN AREA CALCULATIONS</b>	
<b>Multi-tenant Building</b>	Yes
<b>Existing Sign Program</b>	Yes
<b>Permitted Sign Area</b>	360 SF (240' building address frontage x 1.5 for corner lot)
<b>Existing Sign Area</b> (allowed by sign program)	<b>2x 26.6 SF</b> , ground floor tenant signs. (32" H x 120" W) <b>69.5 SF</b> , parking identification sign (32" H x 312" W) <b>42 SF</b> , monument sign (61" H x 66" W x 1.5) <b>16.66 SF</b> , address identification (30" H x 80" W)
<b>Proposed Sign Area</b>	<b>55 SF</b> , upper-level sign (40.7" H x 194" W) ----- <b>236.36 SF Total Proposed Including Sign Program</b>
<b>Compliance</b>	No, as proposed the sign is proposed more more than 30" above the 2 <sup>nd</sup> level's floor and is a prohibited Upper Level Sign.

Impact on Historic Resources

The subject property is not listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory.

**Code Compliance**

This application has been preliminarily reviewed for compliance with the base district's development standards which address aspects of the plan that could result in significant changes to the project's design. A complete code-compliance review will not occur until the application is submitted for plan check. Any significant changes to the design subsequent to any ARB approval will require Board approval.

**CEQA Status**

The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15311 (a), Class 11, of the State Implementation CEQA Guidelines in that the project involves the construction or replacement of minor accessory structures (on premise signs) to existing commercial, industrial or institutional facilities.

## **Summary**

Staff recommends that the Architectural Review Board deny the subject request to allow a prohibited upper-level sign.

The Architectural Review Board's approval, conditions of approval, or denial of this application may be appealed to the Planning Commission if the appeal is filed with the Zoning Administrator within ten consecutive days following the date of the Architectural Review Board's determination in the manner provided in SMMC 9.61.100.

## **Attachments**

- A. Applicant's Submittal Material
- B. October 21, 2019 Staff Report and Applicant's Submittal Materials

<https://smgov365.sharepoint.com/teams/pcdsp/cityplanning/arb/strprt/sr19/19arb-0054> (1260 15th st) round 2 sign adjust & program - copy.docx