



Variance Staff Report

Case: VAR 2012-001		
Reference Name	Sun Valley Commons Digital Sign	
Proposed Request	Variance Relief from UDO Division 900 regulating signage.	
Existing Site Characteristics	Existing Zoning	GBD (General Business District) within a Village Center overlay
	Existing Use	Commercial Shopping Center
	Site Acreage	28.8
Applicant	The Moser Group	
BOA Hearing Date	May 24, 2012	
Location	6449 Old Monroe Road	
Tax Map Number(s)	07090004, 07090004A, 07090004B, 07090004C, 07090005, 07090005A, 07090078, 07090079, 0709001A	
Plan Consistency	Designation	Sun Valley Suburban Mix Village
	Consistent with Request	Generally Complies

Project Summary

The applicant is requesting a variance to Division 900, Signs of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to install two digital message boards as part of the new monument signs for Sun Valley Commons Phase 3. Please refer to the Aerial View Map below for proposed sign locations. The UDO does not permit digital message boards for commercial uses outside the Highway 74 Business Corridor. The individual digital message board is sized at approximately seventeen (17) inches in height by eight (8) feet in width. The overall dimensions of each monument sign that the digital message board is a component of is nineteen (19) feet in height and ten and a half feet (10.5) wide, with a total message area of approximately one hundred (100) square feet.

Phase 3 of the Sun Valley Commons shopping center is currently under development with a fourteen screen cinema expected to open in June 2012. Six new buildings are planned for this phase in addition to the movie theatre (see Attachment 2).

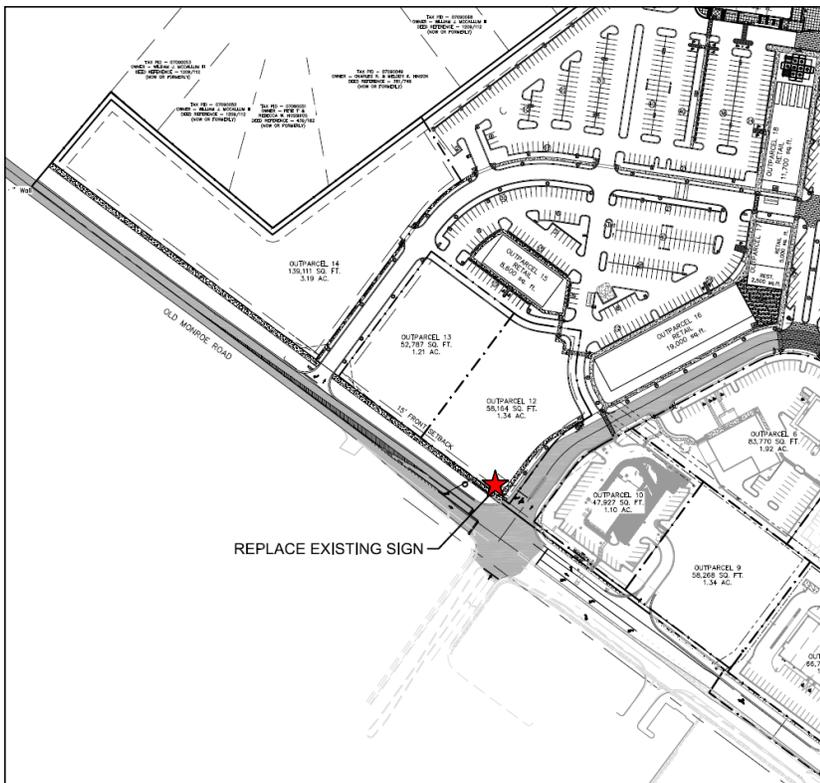
Analysis

Site and Adjacent Properties

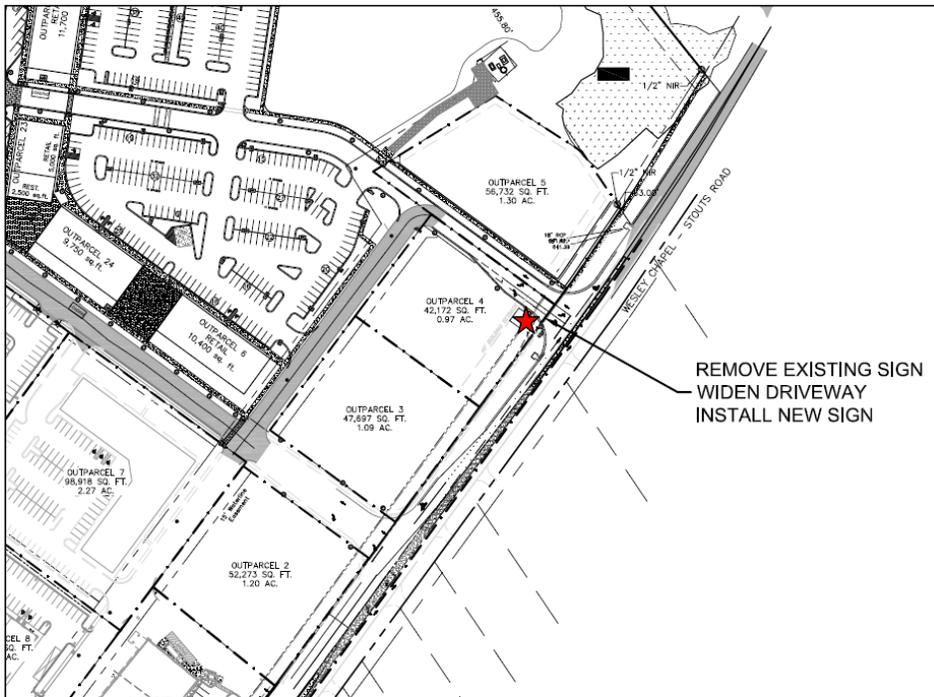
The subject property is a multitenant shopping center consisting of a variety of restaurants, retail businesses, and services. Sun Valley Commons (SVC) lies within the Sun Valley Village Center and is zoned General Business District (GBD). The intent of the Village Center concept is to create a mixed-use, higher density, and pedestrian-friendly environment. The intent of the sign regulations within village centers is to help foster a more pedestrian-scale sense of place by encouraging smaller signs with more subdued forms of illumination.

The immediate area surrounding SVC includes a Harris Teeter Shopping center on the south side of Old Monroe Road, Sun Valley Corner shopping center on the east side of Wesley Chapel Stouts Road, and the Sun Valley High School. The surrounding neighborhoods are Valley Estates (immediately adjacent), Bonanza Park to the north, and Brandon Oaks to the west. The maps below illustrate the locations of the proposed signs.

Site Plan- Old Monroe Rd Entrance

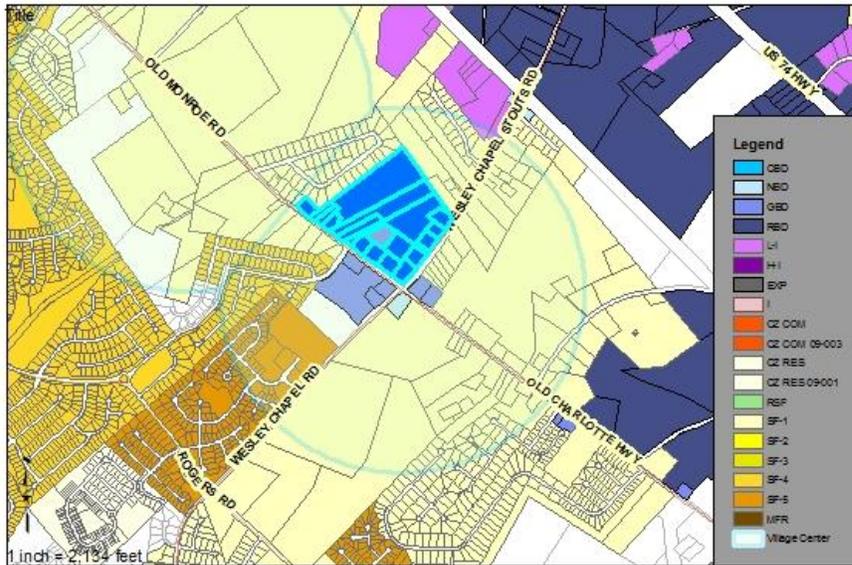


Site Plan- Wesley Chapel Stouts Rd Entrance



As reflected in the Zoning Map below, the subject property is zoned GBD with GBD, the Neighborhood Business District (NBD), and Single-Family Residential-1 surrounding the subject property.

Zoning Map



Variance Request

The variance request is associated with Section 990.030 of the UDO (Attachment 4), which regulates the use of changeable message boards for commercial uses. Digital message boards for commercial uses are limited to businesses within the Highway 74 Business Corridor. The rationale behind this allowance is that the Hwy 74 Corridor is dominated by commercial uses, whereas other Town thoroughfares, such as Old Monroe Road, contain more of a mixture of uses, including residential. The Town's aim is to try and strike a balance between aesthetics and meeting the needs of the business community. As previously mentioned, signage within a village center overlay is intended to be pedestrian-oriented in light of the mixed-use nature of the overall environment.

The applicant is requesting a variance to allow a digital message board in order to promote existing and future businesses within Sun Valley Commons. The proposed digital message boards would comprise eleven (11) square feet of the one hundred (100) total square feet on each new monument sign (2). The variance application indicates the digital message board would be of a static nature with a change of copy occurring no more frequently than every twelve (12) hours on both of the new monument signs. The variance application indicates the message boards would be used to announce the opening of new stores, town-wide events, seasonal markets, and other special events.

In order to gain a better understanding regarding how other larger shopping centers in the Charlotte area promote special events and other activities, staff researched the types of signage used by similar shopping centers, along with other means of advertising utilized. The findings of this research are summarized in the table below.

Comparable Shopping Centers Research

Name of Shopping Center	Digital Message Board	Types of Advertisement Used
<p>Stonecrest 7824 Rea Road</p> 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Print • Radio • Website • Social media • Interior banners • Custom sidewalk signage
<p>Blakeney 9870 Rea Road</p> 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandwich boards • Website
<p>Arsley Town Center S. Tryon & I-485</p> 	Yes, 2- one at the main entrance and one inside the center.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital message board • Website
<p>The Arboretum Hwy 51 & Providence Road</p> 	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directory Signage • Website

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5. The hardship suffered by the applicant is not the result of the applicant's own actions;
and
6. The variance will neither result in the extension of a nonconforming situation in violation of UDO DIVISION 1400, Nonconformities, nor authorize the initiation of a nonconforming use of land.

If one of these findings cannot be made, then the Board must move to deny the variance request, stating for the record why the Board has decided to do so.

Summary

The Town has provided its analysis of this variance request in the above staff report, and now offers this into the record for the Board's consideration.

Staff Contact

Keith Sorensen
Planning Technician

Attachment 1- Application and Letter of Intent

Attachment 2- Site Plan

Attachment 3- Sign Rendering

Attachment 4- UDO 990.030

Attachment 1
Application including Letter of Intent

Attachment 2
Site Plan

Attachment 3
Sign Rendering

Attachment 4
UDO 990.030