

May 7, 2009

Mr. William J. Mueller,
Village President, and
Board of Trustees
Village of Lombard

Subject: PC 09-05; 300-312 South Main Street (Prairie Path Villas)

Dear President and Trustees:

Your Plan Commission transmits for your consideration its recommendation regarding the above-referenced petition. The petitioner requests that the Village take the following action on the subject property:

1. Pursuant to Section 155.504(A) of the Lombard Zoning Ordinance (major changes to a planned development), amend the conditional use for the Prairie Path Villas Planned Development, as established by Ordinance 5802, to allow for modifications to the approved signage plan.

After due notice and as required by law, the Plan Commission conducted a public hearing for this petition on April 20, 2009.

Dan Coffey, 1300 S. Finley Road, Suite 103, Lombard, presented the petition. He explained that he purchased a business condo unit in the Prairie Path Villas for his business. He indicated that about 6 months ago he inquired about signage with the Village and initially thought the panel sign was acceptable. It was not until Mr. Pyter from Olympic Sign submitted details to the Village that the provisions regulating the site came to light. Mr. Coffey explained that David George, the developer of the building, indicated to him that the Planned Development allowed for more signage and awnings. He was not aware of the channel lettering requirement until staff made reference to the planned development ordinance and the Main Street Place requirements. He indicated that these are tough economic times and that the channel letter sign is much more expensive - \$16,500 versus \$3,700. Mr. Coffey said that financing is limited and cannot afford the more expensive sign. He also stated that Mr. George, owner and president of the association, preferred the appearance of the panel sign and having individual letters attached to the wall would create maintenance problems.

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He continued that there were concerns about his responses to standards being an obstruction or distraction and don't believe they will do that. He said it is important to have a lit sign because he works late and his patients are accustomed to him staying open until 9 p.m. Without the proper signage, it would make it difficult to find his business. He mentioned the parking being in the back of the building and that his clients may miss the turn onto Ash. He respects Community Development's passion and desires to improve Lombard. He indicated that he plans to be here for many years. He said he is in a bad situation now with financing and so he needs the Commissioners' help. If the petition is denied it will delay his ability to get the proper signage to get downtown going. He added that he cares about Lombard, serving on the Board of Directors for Chamber of Commerce, Rotary and Lombard Town Centre. He said that he would not let a sign go up that doesn't represent Lombard nor will David George. He believes that the panel type sign would look visually better, satisfy the Commissioners and allow him to support his family and employees with the additional savings.

Chairperson Ryan opened the meeting for public comment.

Tom Knapp spoke in support of the request and provided additional documents. He indicated that he is the architect for Mr. Coffey's office space and is also the Vice President of the Lombard Town Centre. He also stated that he is representing himself and the Lombard Town Centre. He said that although he was only the architect to assist Mr. Coffey with his build-out, he got involved once he learned about the signage issues. He indicated that he contacted staff inquiring about the signage provisions and was told the sign was acceptable. He said that the petitioner proceeded with a sign contractor to put a formal proposal together and submit it to the Village. The sign was rejected and he set up a meeting with Village staff to discuss the matter. He stated that staff did not provide him with anything in writing explaining the requirements. He said the sign meets the zoning requirements and that the Planned Development was unclear. He suggested a better process for business owners with regards to signage approval.

Chairperson Ryan then requested the staff report.

Stuart Moynihan, Associate Planner, presented the staff report. Staff drafted the IDRC report to submit to the public record in its entirety. The petitioner, Dr. Daniel Coffey of D.C. Spinal Wellness and Sport Rehabilitation, is proposing to install a box style wall sign on the eastern façade of the Prairie Path Villas building. Ordinance 5802 (PC 05-43), approved the Prairie Path Villas Planned Development. As part of the approvals, all wall signage associated with the development was to be in accordance with the approved elevation plan as shown on exhibit "A". In addition, as a condition of approval, signage associated with the development was to consist of channel letters. Since the proposed new sign would not be of a design or in a location approved as part of Ordinance 5802, a planned development amendment is required.

Mr. Moynihan stated that the petitioner is proposing to install a box style wall sign at Prairie Path Villas located at 310-312 S. Main St. The wall sign is proposed to be installed on the eastern elevation of the building and will face Main Street. The petitioner is the owner of the far northern commercial condominium unit on the Main Street side of the building. The proposed sign would be installed above the awning just south of the Main Street entrance to this unit. As the sign is proposed to be placed in a location not depicted on the approved building elevations,

an amendment to the planned development for signage location would be necessary. In addition, the planned development required that all exterior wall signs on the building be of a channel letter design. As the proposed sign consists of a single interiorly illuminated aluminum cabinet, the petitioner is requesting that the conditional use for a planned development be amended to allow a box style wall sign.

The Comprehensive Plan identifies the site for Community Commercial uses. The existing use is therefore consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

The subject property is bordered by other commercial uses, a recreational pathway, and multi-family housing. The proposed signage is not expected to negatively impact the surrounding land uses. The request is generally compatible with the surrounding land uses.

Compatibility with the Sign Ordinance

In PC 05-43, Prairie Path Villas was granted the following deviations related to signage:

- g) A deviation from Sections 153.211(F) and 153.508(B)(19)(a) of the Sign Ordinance to allow for awning and canopy signs to be displayed in conjunction with wall signs;
- h) A deviation from Section 153.508(B)(19)(c) to allow for more than one wall sign per street frontage; and

The deviation for the number of signs was supported by staff to allow a sufficient number of signs to identify the individual commercial tenants in the building. The use of mixed signage was supported by staff to promote the aesthetic effect of breaking up the building's street elevations. The intention was to contribute to the impression of a series of separate buildings, effectively reducing the single, larger building to a more pedestrian scale.

The petitioner's proposed wall sign would be installed on the eastern elevation of Prairie Path Villas. The proposed signage measures four feet (4') by twelve feet (12') for a total of forty-eight (48) square feet. The Sign Ordinance requires that the total sign area of all wall signs on a property in the B5A District shall not exceed one times the lineal front footage of the property and that no one wall sign shall exceed fifty (50) square feet. Therefore, no variation for signage area is necessary as the proposed wall sign does meet the pertinent regulations.

Staff also notes that the petitioner has indicated on his submitted permit plans that his tenant space has sixty feet (60') of frontage along Main Street. The proposed signage area would only make use of forty-eight feet (48') of frontage along Main Street.

Ordinance 5802 which established the Prairie Path Villas Planned Development requires that wall signage be of a channel letter design. The following conditions are applicable to this petition:

- 3. As part of the building permit submittal, the petitioner shall satisfactorily address the comments included as part of the Inter-Departmental Review Report.
- 9. The proposed wall and awning signs on the building shall be designed and located on the building consistent with the submitted plans.

Regarding Condition 3, staff made several comments concerning signage in the Inter-Departmental Review Report of PC 05-43. Among those comments were the following:

- *“Based upon the submitted elevations, two deviations are required - a deviation from Sections 153.211(F) and 153.508(B)(19)(a) of the Sign Ordinance to allow for awning and canopy signs to be displayed in conjunction with wall signs, and a deviation from Section 153.508(B)(19)(c) to allow for more than one wall sign per street frontage.”*
- *“The petitioner’s request for a mixed sign package is intended to break up the scale of the building along Main Street to give it the appearance of multiple structures at a pedestrian level. The awning signage is meant to “frame” the center façade of the Main Street elevation, while the other wall sign elements identify the respective business establishments.”*
- *“Staff would be supportive of this request provided that the wall signage follows the same guidelines the Village has approved for many recent developments, including the Main Street Place planned development (SPA 05-05), kitty-corner to the site. **These provisions include the requirement that all wall signage to be installed on the building shall be of a uniform design and shall be placed on the building in accordance with the wall sign package as depicted on the submitted building elevations.**”*

As noted above in the IDRC and as a condition of approval, signage in the Prairie Path Villas Development was to be of a uniform design and placed according to submitted building elevations, same as the guidelines established for Main Street Place at 229 S. Main Street (SPA 05-05). That development was approved with the following condition:

1. **All wall signage to be installed on the subject property shall be of a channel letter design** and shall be placed on the building in accordance with the wall sign package as depicted on the submitted building elevations.

The approval of Prairie Path Villas was conditioned that it meet the same signage design standards required at Main Street Place, specifically channel letter design, and that the signage be located as depicted on the approved plans. These conditions were recommended by staff and approved by the Village Board as a means to improving the overall quality and uniformity of signage design and to ensure consistency in location. As the approved plans were interpreted during the public hearing to be consistent with the requirement for channel letter signs, there was no condition written as part of Ordinance 5802 which specifically stated that channel letter signs would be required at Prairie Path Villas.

It is the opinion of staff that these amendments could potentially reduce the quality of signage on the building and the quality of the development as a whole. A future tenant could replace this box style wall sign with one of an inferior quality. If other signs on the building are to be channel letter in design, a box style sign would also degrade the uniformity of the signage package which was preferred in PC 05-43. Staff also notes that the approval of these

amendments may set a precedent for other tenants in the Prairie Path Villas building and other nearby buildings, such as Main Street Place, should they desire to install box style wall signs.

The Planned Development was designed to ensure unified and compatible design of buildings and signage, as authorized in Section 155.502 (D) of the Zoning Ordinance. Staff finds that the proposed amendment to the Planned Development will reduce the quality of signage on the building and the quality of the development as a whole. Therefore staff recommends denial of the request.

If the Plan Commission does determine that proposed amendments are desirable, the Commissioners may want to consider similar amendments for the entire planned development, allowing for any future signage to only meet the requirements of the Sign Ordinance. This would avoid the possible situation in which public hearings are necessary on a sign by sign basis, should similar signs be requested. The following condition could be added to any motion for approval:

1. But for the two deviations granted by Ordinance 5802, wall signs installed on the exterior elevations of the Prairie Path Villas Planned Development shall be subject only to the requirements of the Sign Ordinance.

Chairperson Ryan then opened the meeting for comments among the Commissioners.

Commissioner Nelson asked if the sign would be lit. The petitioner indicated it would be lit and that he needed it that way to help direct his customers.

Commissioner Sweetser indicated that since it was not specially stated that channel lettering was required that there might be a good reason for making some adjustments however she was not sure what they would be. She wanted to know if other Commissioners had any thoughts.

Commissioner Cooper suggested that the petitioner consider other types of signage that would be less expensive but still have channel letters such as steel.

Commissioner Burke suggested that the letter be back lit rather than individually lit to save costs. Commissioner Flint agreed and said there could be an alternative cost effective way to light the sign.

Commissioner Burke stated that he would like this to move forward and that he understands the dilemma and confusion, however based on the information they have, the signage is unacceptable and does not go well with the other signage on the building. He indicated that he is sympathetic to the petitioner regarding costs however he felt that the channel letter goes well with the building and other signage and that he was not in favor of the request.

Commissioner Sweetser suggested they grant a time period for this sign to be up and ready to go and be replaced in 2 years. She then stated that the planned development required channel letters and that the box sign appears to be like a billboard on the building. She stated that they should be consistent with the standards of the planned development since this is the first sign. She suggested to staff to review its process of giving information.

Commissioner Burke motioned to deny PC 09-05. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Flint.

After due consideration of the petition and the testimony presented, the Plan Commission found that the proposal **does not comply** with the standards required by the Lombard Zoning Ordinance; and, therefore, moved that the Plan Commission find that the findings included as part of the Inter-departmental Review Report be the findings of the Plan Commission and therefore, by a roll call vote of 6 to 0, recommends to the Corporate Authorities **denial** of the zoning actions associated with PC 09-05.

Respectfully,

VILLAGE OF LOMBARD

Donald Ryan, Chairperson
Lombard Plan Commission

c. Petitioner
Lombard Plan Commission