

**Meeting Date:** July 16, 2020

**Planner:** Elizabeth Kay Marchetti, AICP

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## APPLICATION SUMMARY:

**Case Number:** VAR20-0001

**Application Type:** Sign Variance

**Location:** 2679 W. Main Street  
(North side of Main Street near the intersection of Rapp Street and Santa Fe Drive)

**Applicants:** Matt Robertson / Grant Barnhill

**Owner:** 2679 Main Street Partners LLC

**Zoning District:** B-2 PDO Business Community District with a Planned Development Overlay

**Applicant Request:** Allow the wall sign near the top of the western wall of the building to be internally illuminated from dusk until dawn.

## PROCESS:

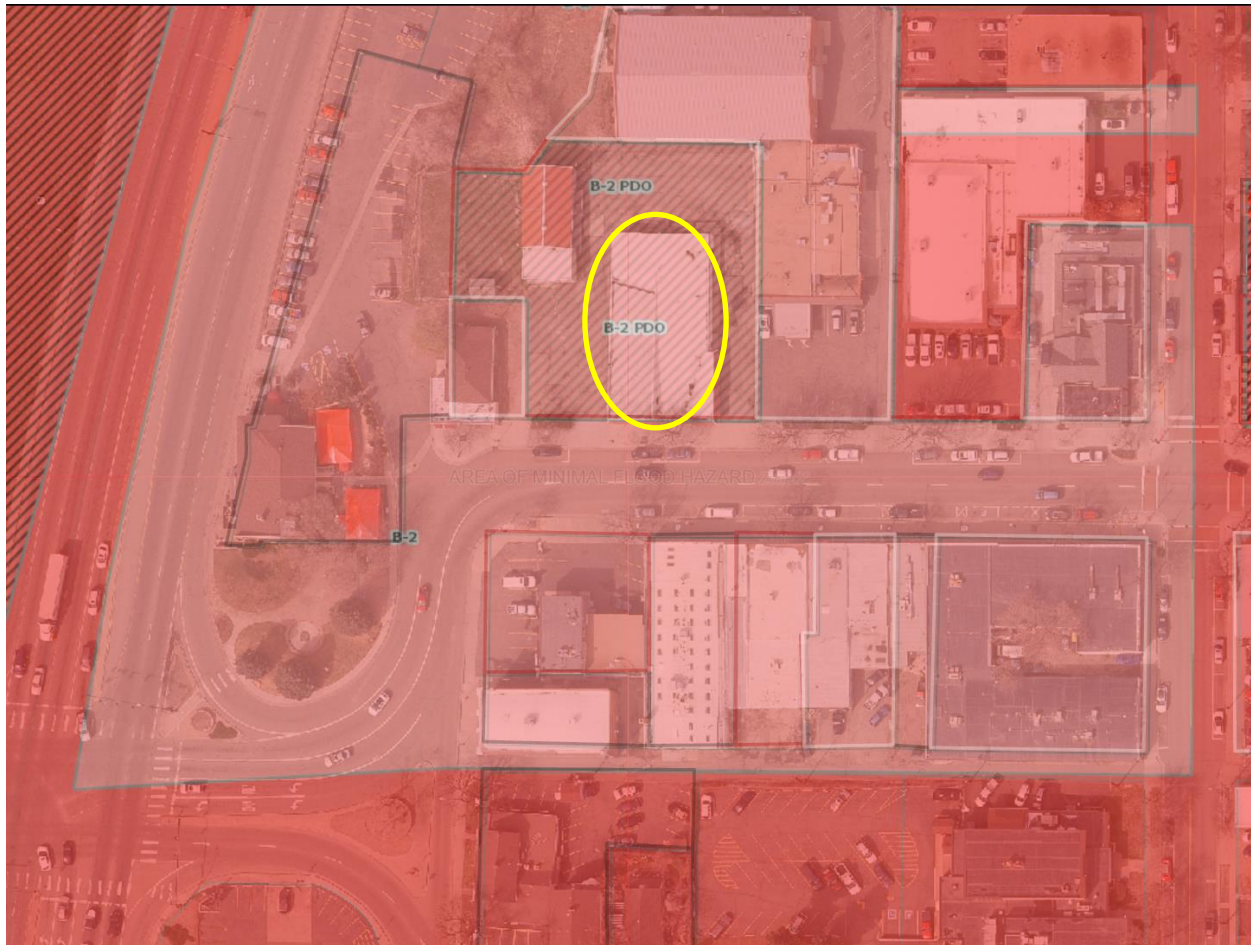
Section 10-17-7-11 of the Littleton City Code (LCC) gives the Board of Adjustment (BOA) authority to grant variances to the sign code. A variance cannot be granted unless all of the following conditions are met:

- (A) There are special circumstances or conditions such as the existence of buildings, topography, vegetation, sign structures or other matters on adjacent lots or within the adjacent public right-of-way, which would substantially restrict the effectiveness of the sign in question; provided, however, that such special circumstances or conditions must be peculiar to the particular business or enterprise to which the applicant desires to draw attention, and do not apply in general to all businesses or enterprises in the area.
- (B) The variance would be in general harmony with the purposes of this chapter, and specifically would not be injurious to the neighborhood in which the business or enterprise to which the applicant desires to draw attention is located.
- (C) The variance is the minimum one necessary to permit the applicant to reasonably draw attention to his business or enterprise.
- (D) The board may grant a variance subject to any conditions which it deems necessary or desirable to make the device which is permitted by the variance compatible with the purposes of this chapter.

Staff and Board of Adjustment (Board) review are the only two steps in the sign variance review process. Appeals to the Board's decision would be processed through the court system.

**LOCATION:**

The site is located at 2679 W. Main Street and is within the boundary of the Main Street Historic District, although the building is not a Contributing Structure.

**BACKGROUND TIMELINE :**

2017	New Building Constructed at 2769 W. Main Street
4/27/2020	Sign Variance discussed by staff during weekly Technical Team Meeting
4/28/2020	Sign Variance Application Submitted

**APPLICATION DETAILS:**

The subject property was developed in 2017 as a commercial/office building, which is a permitted use in the B-2 PDO zone district. The tenant, Shift Workspaces, is occupying the second and third floors of the building along with approximately 800 square feet of the ground floor of the building. Shift Workspaces is proposing a 141 square foot sign, which will be generally centered on the third-floor level of the western wall and will be internally illuminated at night. The building is

subject to the Downtown Littleton Design Standards, and Standard number 4.5.7 does not allow signs on the sides of buildings, above the second floor, to be illuminated.

The building at 2679 W. Main Street is a long rectangle with the shortest facade facing Main Street. The largest façade of the building with the greatest visibility by the public is the western wall, which faces Santa Fe Drive. The area where the owner proposes to locate the sign is generally visible by pedestrians and wheelchair users walking on Main Street, people in The Melting Pot's restaurant parking lot, and from Santa Fe Drive. It's unlikely that the sign will be noticeable, or have an impact on, the evening experience of the Historic Main Street District.

### **SIGN AT NIGHT FROM CLOSEST LANE OF SANTA FE DRIVE**



### **CRITERIA & STAFF ANALYSIS:**

The following is an assessment of the application under the criteria for approval contained in LCC section 10-17-7-11:

- 1. There are special circumstances or conditions such as the existence of buildings, topography, vegetation, sign structures or other matters on adjacent lots or within the adjacent public right-of-way, which would substantially restrict the effectiveness of the sign in question; provided, however, that such special circumstances or conditions must be peculiar to the particular business or enterprise to which the applicant desires to draw attention, and do not apply in general to all businesses or enterprises in the area.**

*Applicant Response: The west facing sign will be viewed from Santa Fe. The distance from which the sign is viewed necessitates it be lit, in order to be legible at night by vehicles.*

*The proposed lit wall sign is at variance with Section 4.5.7 of the Downtown Littleton Design Standards which states “Wall signs located on the side wall of a building that faces a side property line (including a side property line along a street) shall not be lighted above the ground floor.”*

*The other businesses that have the exposure to Santa Fe, are much closer to passing traffic and do contain lit signs. The Architecture of their buildings, in addition to the topography of their lots, allows for their signs to be located at ground level, ours does not.*

Staff Analysis: Design Standard 4.5.7 of the Downtown Littleton Design Standards, when written, did not likely envision this scenario as it impacts this new business in this new building. Standard 4.5.7 is appropriate when applied to the sides of buildings that are either immediately adjacent to another residential or tall commercial building. However, the western wall of the building at 2679 W. Main Street is slightly more than 1,200 feet away from the nearest residence and is set back more than 100 feet from the closest, northbound lane of Santa Fe Drive. The approximately 300 linear foot setback from Santa Fe Drive is extraordinary compared to the setback of all other commercial buildings that have a prominent face onto Santa Fe Drive.

- 2. The variance would be in general harmony with the purposes of this chapter, and specifically would not be injurious to the neighborhood in which the business or enterprise to which the applicant desires to draw attention is located.**

*Applicant Response: The sign is virtually imperceptible from inside the historic district and would bring increased visibility not only to the Shift Main Street Community, but also to Main Street itself. It would serve as a reminder to those traveling on Santa Fe that Historic Downtown Littleton is a destination worth visiting again—a district that not only contains important historic structures and unique character but new businesses and amenities as well.*

*We feel this sign enhances the general appearance and aesthetics of the urban environment by aiding in the identification of the property with a sign that is internally lit and matches the overall building style and use.*

Staff Analysis: The following intent language is from the City’s Code:

Purposes And Interests Served: The purposes of this chapter include, but are not limited to: 1) serving the governmental and public interests in controlling visual clutter, protecting community aesthetics, and safety of drivers, passengers, and pedestrians; 2) aiding in the identification of properties, land uses, and establishments; 3) enhancing the general appearance and aesthetics of the urban environment; and 4) protecting the natural beauty of the City.

The proposal to allow the wall sign to be illuminated meets the purposes and interests articulated above. The distance between the sign and the adjacent, one-story building to the west is great enough that light will not trespass on that property at night. The proposed, illuminated sign will not create any light trespass on the closest residences that face the western wall, which are more than 1,200 feet away.



The reasonable size of the sign combined with the distance of the sign from the closest travel lane of Santa Fe Drive will prevent driver distraction and will not contribute to visual clutter. The quality of the urban environment will be enhanced through the high quality sign design and its location.

**3. The variance is the minimum one necessary to permit the applicant to reasonably draw attention to [the] business or enterprise.**

*Applicant Response: The Architecture of our building does not allow for the sign to be located at ground level. The distance from which the sign is viewed necessitates it be lit, in order to be legible at night by vehicles. The sign would be expressive of the activity of the use for which it is displayed and provide sufficient but not excessive illumination.*

Staff Analysis: The interior illumination of business signs on structures that face busy roadways is a standard practice. The size, location, and design of the proposed sign mitigates any potential negative impacts made by the sign during evening hours. The illumination of this sign should be permitted so that Shift Workspaces may draw attention to itself during evening hours like all other businesses in the vicinity that present a significant façade to Santa Fe Drive.

**SIGN AT NIGHT FROM SOUTHBOUND LANE OF SANTA FE DRIVE**



**PUBLIC NOTICE:**

Notice of a public hearing was posted on the subject property and at city locations in advance of the BOA meeting in compliance with the city's public notice requirements.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

The proposed variance meets the requirements of Littleton City Code Section 10-17-7-11. Staff recommends approval of BOA Resolution 03-2020 approving the variance for an internally illuminated sign towards the top of the western wall at 2679 W. Main Street.