City Council Communication

Department: Community Development CASE #PC-25-001 Applicant/Property Owner: H&S Council Bluffs 3125, LLC and H&S Council Bluffs 3145, LLC 10730 Pacific Street, Suite 230 Omaha, NE 68114 Representative: Justin Crawford Access Project Management 10730 Pacific Street, Suite 230 Omaha, NE 68114	Resolution No. _____	City Council: 3/24/2025 Planning Commission: 3/11/2025

Subject/Title

Request: Public hearing on the request of H&S Council Bluffs 3125, LLC and H&S Council Bluffs 3145, LLC, to amend the adopted planned commercial development plan, relative to signage, for properties legally described as Lot 2, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase V and Lot 19, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase 3, City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

Location: 3125 and 3145 Manawa Centre Drive

Background

The Community Development Department has received a request from H&S Council Bluffs 3125, LLC and H&S Council Bluffs 3145, LLC to amend the adopted planned commercial development plan, relative to signage, for properties legally described above.

The subject properties consist of two parcels located in the Lake Manawa Power Center shopping center and contain the former Gordman's (3125 Manawa Centre Drive) and Toys-R-Us (3145 Manawa Centre Drive) buildings. The conjoined buildings have largely sat vacant since the former big box retailers closed. The subject properties are now under ownership by the one property owner who is in the process of dividing the buildings into four tenant bays for new retail users (Ross, HomeGoods, Sierra Trading Co. and one additional future tenant) to be operated under one property management entity. The purpose of the subject request is to adopt site specific signage standards for the re-activated retail space to allow attached signage for the four tenant spaces and a shared pole sign. The applicant's letter of intent is included as Attachment 'A'. The proposed signage is outlined below and shown in Attachment 'B':

Proposed Detached Signage

The applicant has proposed one 280 square foot pole sign measuring 60-feet in height to be located in a parking lot landscape island north of 3125 Manawa Centre Drive (see site plan included as Attachment 'C'). Said pole sign is intended to provide signage for all four (4) tenants of 3125 and 3145 Manawa Centre Drive. As the sign will be located at 3125 Manawa Centre Drive and will provide advertising for two (2) tenants located at 3145 Manawa Centre Drive, the sign is considered an off-premises sign. Typically, billboards are the only off-premises signage type permitted within City limits and are subject to Section 15.33.190, *Off-Premises Signs (Billboards)*, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance). Per Section 15.33.190, billboards are only allowed

on properties zoned I-1, I-2, or I-3 District. Therefore, in order to allow the proposed pole sign, the applicant is requesting that the development plan be modified to allow for one (1) shared pole sign between the two subject properties.

Proposed Attached Signage - Proposed attached signage is outlined in the table below:

Address	Tenant	Sign Location	Size (Sq. Ft.)
3125 Manawa Centre Drive	Ross	West Façade (Front Façade)	311
		North Facade	230.25
		East Façade (Facing I-29)	144
		Ross Total:	*685.25*
	HomeGoods	West Facade	235.5
		East Façade (Facing I-29)	58.5
		HomeGoods Total:	*294*
		3125 Manawa Centre Dr. Total:	***979.25***
3145 Manawa Centre Drive	Sierra	West Facade	268.37
		East Façade (Facing I-29)	45.89
		Sierra Total:	*314.26*
	Future Tenant	*No specific signage renderings proposed. 560 square feet of attached signage is requested in the submitted Letter of Intent (see Attachment 'X')*	*560*
		3145 Manawa Centre Dr. Total:	***874.26***
		Total Proposed Attached Signage:	***1,853.51***

Note – Sheet SH in Attachment 'X' shows proposed window signage for Ross. Per Section 15.33.0801, Exempt Signs, of the Council Bluffs Municipal Code (Zoning Ordinance), the proposed window signs are considered exempt signs and do not count towards the maximum allowed signage for the properties.

Total proposed signage:

1,853.51 sq. ft. (Attached Signage)
+ 280 sq. ft. (Detached Signage)
2,133.51 sq. ft. of Total Proposed Signage

Land Use and Zoning – The subject properties are zoned P-C/Planned Commercial District and are surrounded by commercial retail uses and like zoning on all sides, as noted below:

Direction	Zoning District(s)	Land Uses
North	P-C/Planned Commercial District	Retail Shopping Establishments (Harbor Freight, Home Depot) and Interstate 29
South	P-C/Planned Commercial District	Retail Shopping Establishments (Walmart, Sam's Club, U.S. Cellular)
East	P-C/Planned Commercial District	Undeveloped land and Interstate 29
West	P-C/Planned Commercial District	Retail Shopping Establishments (Aldi, Home Depot)

A location/zoning map is included as Attachment 'D.'

The Future Land Use Plan of the Bluffs Tomorrow: 2030 Plan (Comprehensive Plan) designates the subject properties as 'Regional Commercial.'

City Departments and Utilities – All appropriate City departments and utilities were notified of the proposed planned commercial development plan. The following comments were received:

A. The Council Bluffs Public Works Department stated they had no comments on the request as it appears all signage will be located on private property.

B. The Council Bluffs Police Department stated they had no comments or objections to the request.

C. The Council Bluffs Fire Department stated they had no comments on the request.

D. Council Bluffs Water Works stated they had no comments on the request.

E. MidAmerican Energy stated they had no conflicts or concerns with the request and noted that the developer or their agents are required to contact MidAmerican Energy directly to identify costs and responsibilities associated with the electric service requirements for the redevelopment of the site.

F. The Community Development Department provided the following comments:

1. The Lake Manawa Power Center development plan was approved by City Council on May 4, 1992 via Resolution #92-104 (see Case #PC-92-001) and has been amended on several occasions as the center developed and new tenants/users located within the shopping center. As a general standard, the Lake Manawa Power Center development plan allowed a maximum of 15 percent of the street facing façade for attached signage; 60-foot tall pole signs for lots abutting the Interstate; and a total maximum permitted sign area per lot equivalent to two times the street frontage.

   Certain sites, as they were developed with new users, adopted signage standards specific to each lot. Resolution No. 02-348 was adopted by City Council on December 16, 2002 and included the following signage standard for Lot 2, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision (3125 Manawa Centre Drive):

   "Approval of two wall signs as presented, for the Gordmans store on Lot 20 or as replatted. No additional signage will be permitted without prior consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council approval." This allowed a maximum of 772 square feet of attached signage for the property. Gordmans did not propose a detached sign; therefore, no specific detached signage standards were adopted for this property.

   3125 and 3145 Manawa Centre Drive do not have any street frontage. However, historically, the west "front" façade of 3145 Manawa Centre Drive has been treated as the property's street frontage for signage calculation purposes. This allowed the property a maximum of 517.5 square feet of attached signage.

2. The below table summarizes the most recent permanent signage on the subject properties, based on permit data and previous adopted development plans. All signage of the former tenants has since been removed.

Address	***Tenant***	***Sign Location***	***Size (Sq. Ft.)***
3125 Manawa Centre Drive	Gordmans	West Façade (Front)	472
		East Façade (Facing I-29)	300
		Gordmans Total:	*772*
3145 Manawa Centre Drive	Toys-R-Us	West Façade (Front)	332.89
		East Façade (Facing I-29)	61
		Pole Sign*	150 sq. ft.
		Toys-R-Us Total:	*543.89*

**Note – The Toys-R-Us pole sign along their Interstate frontage was removed in 2010 when the wall sign was installed on the rear façade facing I-29.*

3. The former big box store buildings on the subject properties are currently in the process of being converted into four tenant bays under one property management entity. The applicant has proposed new signage for the property which includes attached signage for each of the four tenants and one shared pole sign between the tenants to be located at 3125 Manawa Centre Drive. The requested amendment to the development plan is necessary to accommodate the proposed request for the following reasons:

    a. In order to allow one shared pole sign, as currently each property is only allowed one 60-foot tall pole sign;

    b. The proposed total signage amount at 3125 Manawa Centre Drive exceeds the 772 square foot maximum by 457.25 square feet; and

    c. The proposed total signage amount at 3145 Manawa Centre Drive exceeds the 517.5 square foot maximum by 356.76 square feet.

4. The Community Development Department recommends the following signage standards for the subject properties:

    a. The total combined signage allotment for all attached and detached signage shall be limited to a maximum of 1,900 square feet total for both properties;

    b. One, 60-foot tall pole sign shared between the two properties limited to a maximum of 280 square feet, per sign face, shall be allowed to be utilized by only the tenants of the subject properties; and

    c. In order to maintain visibility to the tenant spaces, a maximum of 50 percent of the storefront windows shall remain unobstructed by signage and shall allow for clear visibility into stores for public safety purposes.

    The above maximum signage standard increases the 15 percent maximum of the Lake Manawa Power Center to a 20 percent maximum for the subject properties. Staff is supportive of this increase as it accounts for 1) the reuse of two vacant big box stores as four tenant bays; 2) the

use of a shared pole sign as opposed to two additional new pole signs within the shopping center; and 3) compatibility of new signage to existing development within the Lake Manawa Power Center.

5. In 1993, Menards proposed a detached sign which included signage for Menards and three additional tenants of the Lake Manawa Power Center. At that time, it was noted that the Iowa Department of Transportation (IDOT) has authority for permitting signs located within 660 feet of federal and state highway rights-of-way and that IDOT's regulations prohibit placement of off-premises advertising within this area. It was noted that the proposed signage at that time would have been allowed if they advertise only the business located on the lot upon which the sign sits. The applicant shall coordinate with IDOT to ensure all proposed signage complies with all current federal and state regulations.

   The City has discussed with the applicant the option of replatting the properties into one lot of record so that any shared signage for the tenants would not be considered off-premises. If IDOT is not supportive of a shared pole sign (i.e. off-premises signage) at this location, the applicant would still have the option to replat the properties into a single lot of record to install a shared sign.

Development Plan

The previously approved signage plan as described in the planned commercial development plan for the Lake Manawa Power Center, as adopted on May 4, 1992, shall remain in effect with the exception that signage for properties legally described as Lot 2, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase V and Lot 19, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase 3, City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, shall be as follows:

A. The total combined signage allotment for all attached and detached signage shall be limited to a maximum of 1,900 square feet total for both properties;

B. One, 60-foot tall pole sign shared between the two properties limited to a maximum of 280 square feet, per sign face, shall be allowed to be utilized by only the tenants of the subject properties; and

C. In order to maintain visibility to the tenant spaces, a maximum of 50 percent of the storefront windows shall remain unobstructed by signage and shall allow for clear visibility into stores for public safety purposes.

Recommendation

The Community Development Department recommends approval of the request to amend the adopted planned commercial development plan for property legally described as Lot 2, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase V and Lot 19, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase 3, City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, as follows:

A. The total combined signage allotment for all attached and detached signage shall be limited to a maximum of 1,900 square feet total for both properties;

B. One, 60-foot tall pole sign shared between the two properties limited to a maximum of 280 square feet, per sign face, shall be allowed to be utilized by only the tenants of the subject properties; and

C. In order to maintain visibility to the tenant spaces, a maximum of 50 percent of the storefront windows shall remain unobstructed by signage and shall allow for clear visibility into stores for public safety purposes.

Public Hearing

Staff speakers for the request:
1. Haley Weber, Planner, City of Council Bluffs, 209 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs IA, 51503

Speakers in favor:
1. Justin Crawford, Access Commercial, 10730 Pacific Street, Omaha, NE 68114

Speakers against: None

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the request to amend the adopted planned commercial development plan for property legally described as Lot 2, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase V and Lot 19, Lake Manawa Centre Subdivision Phase 3, City of Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa, as follows:

A. The total combined signage allotment for all attached and detached signage shall be limited to a maximum of 1,900 square feet total for both properties;

B. One, 60-foot tall pole sign shared between the two properties limited to a maximum of 280 square feet, per sign face, shall be allowed to be utilized by only the tenants of the subject properties; and

C. In order to maintain visibility to the tenant spaces, a maximum of 50 percent of the storefront windows shall remain unobstructed by signage and shall allow for clear visibility into stores for public safety purposes.

VOTE: AYE – Freund, Hutcheson, Knauss, Rater, Rew, Stroebele, VanHouten, and Watson. NAY – None. ABSTAIN – None. ABSENT – None. VACANT - Three Motion: Carried.

Attachments

Attachment A: Letter of Intent
Attachment B: Signage Renderings
Attachment C: Site Plan
Attachment D: Location/Zoning Map

Prepared by: Haley Weber, Planner, Community Development Department