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1 inch = 542 feet

Date: 1/5/2023

7310 SE Crosswinds Drive - Variance Request (Sign)

**CITY OF ANKENY
ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT STAFF REPORT**

To: Members of the Zoning Board of Adjustment
From: Bryan Morrissey, Associate Planner
Filing #: 23-02
Meeting Date: March 21, 2023
Address: 7310 SE Crosswinds Drive

APPELLANT REQUEST

A variance to Ankeny Municipal Code Section 195.03(3)(A) that requires: On-site directional signs, not exceeding a maximum of two square feet per sign, shall be permitted in any multi-family, commercial, industrial, or institutional zoning district for the purpose of directing vehicular or pedestrian traffic in a safe and convenient manner, allowing three separate twenty square-foot directional signs along SE Crosswinds Drive.

STAFF POSITION

That the Zoning Board of Adjustment deny a variance to Ankeny Municipal Code Section 195.03(3)(A) allowing three separate twenty square-foot directional signs along SE Crosswinds Drive at 7310 SE Crosswinds Drive.

Staff's position is based on a determination that the shape or shallowness of the subject property is not exceptional, extraordinary situations do not exist, and the oversized directional signs are not in harmony with the intended spirit and purpose of the Ankeny Municipal Code.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The subject property at 7310 SE Crosswinds Drive is located south of SE Corporate Woods Drive and west of SE Four Mile Drive within the southeastern quadrant of Ankeny. The property is zoned PUD, Planned Unit Development and houses an Amazon Delivery/Distribution center on a twenty-nine-acre property.

The applicant is requesting a variance that will allow them to post three separate twenty square-foot directional signs along SE Crosswinds Drive. Per the Ankeny Municipal Code, directional signage is intended to direct vehicular and pedestrian traffic on a particular site and is limited to a maximum of two square-feet per sign.

City staff had initially been contacted about directional signage on the property in the Fall of 2021, with the applicant inquiring about the prospect of the signage exceeding the two square-foot limitation. Recognizing the size and the amount of traffic on the site, staff was flexible with the enforcement of this portion of the Code and allowed the applicant to post larger directional signage on the property as long as it was tucked away from SE Crosswinds Drive and generally not visible from public view. Recently, City staff was contacted once again about the oversized directional signage, this time in the form of three separate directional signs that totaled twenty square feet that would be posted near three access drives on the property. Should the requested variance be approved, three twenty square-foot directional signs will be installed on the east side of the site that will be visible from SE Crosswinds Drive.

PROJECT REPORT

Criteria for Variance

197.01(4) Powers and Duties.

B. To grant a variation in the regulations when a property owner can show ...that by reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of a specific piece of property or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extraordinary or exceptional situation, the strict application of the terms of this title actually prohibits the use of this property in the district; and that the board is satisfied under the evidence before it that a literal enforcement of the provisions of this title would result in unnecessary hardship; provided, however, that all variations granted under this clause shall be in harmony with the intended spirit and purpose of this title.

FINDINGS OF FACT

The subject property at 7310 SE Crosswinds Drive is generally located south of SE Corporate Woods Drive and west of SE Four Mile Drive within the southeastern quadrant of Ankeny. The subject property is zoned PUD and is a part of the Crosswinds Business Park Planned Unit Development. The site contains an approximate 137,000 square-foot distribution center and extensive parking that allows for the distribution and delivery of Amazon products. Neighboring properties in most directions contain similar light-industrial uses and are also a part of the Crosswinds Business Park Planned Unit Development. City records indicate that the primary structure on the site was completed in the Fall of 2020, while plans for redevelopment that increased parking and included general tenant improvements were completed in the Fall of 2021. It is City staff's understanding that the ownership of the building had changed from the time the original building was constructed to the time the redevelopment phase was complete.

As the redevelopment phase of the site was finishing up in the Fall of 2021, City staff was contacted about signage on the property, including directional signage that was to be posted in the parking areas and along SE Crosswinds Drive. A sizeable amount of the signage presented to staff exceeded the two square-foot limitation that exists in the Ankeny Municipal Code for directional signage. After discussions with the applicant, staff recognized the considerable amount of traffic entering and exiting the property and decided to be flexible with the enforcement of that portion of the Code. Staff informed the applicant that the directional signage exceeding the two square-foot limitation would be allowed as long as it was tucked away from SE Crosswinds Drive and not visible from public streets. Shortly after informing the applicant of staff's decision, directional signage was posted throughout the parking areas on the property.



Directional Signage Posted Near the Southernmost Access Drive



Directional Signage Posted in the Visitors and Associates Parking Area

Recently, the applicant inquired with staff once again about the prospect of additional directional signage on the property and their desire to have larger signs near three access drives that lead to SE Crosswinds Drive. After reviewing the proposed signs and their location, staff informed the applicant that the proposed signs would either need to be moved back further away from SE Crosswinds Drive or they'd have to meet the two square-foot requirement as stated in the Ankeny Municipal Code. It was at this time that applicant inquired about the possibility of a variance for the proposed signs. Staff then provided the applicant with the necessary materials needed to apply for a variance from the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

As indicated on their submitted site plan, the applicant is proposing oversized directional signage near three different access drives on the site. The three access drives lead to a trucking area, a visitors and associates parking lot, and a delivery van parking lot. Based on the location and size of the three proposed signs, it's reasonable to believe that these signs will not only be visible to those traveling along SE Crosswinds Drive, but they will also be visible to neighboring properties in the area as well. It is noteworthy to point out that a ground/monument sign exists on the southeast side of the site near one of the access drives off SE Crosswinds Drive (see picture on next page). The ground/monument sign lists general directional information for the property, similar to what's shown on the proposed signs, along with the site address and an Amazon Delivery logo. One monument sign is allowed by Code on the property and was permitted by staff in 2021.

Although staff recognizes that the Code's two square-foot limitation for directional signage can be restrictive for larger properties that attract substantial traffic, it is something that has generally been followed by similar industrial sites in the City. As mentioned previously, staff has been flexible with the enforcement of the directional signage size limitation, allowing the owners to post directional signs that exceed the size limitation as long as they are not visible from public streets. Furthermore, staff has concerns about setting a precedent for oversized directional signage that's visible from public right-of-way's, as it is expected that the Crosswinds Business Park and the SE Four Mile Drive area will see similar light-industrial development in the future. Enforcement of the directional sign size limitation may become difficult if the subject property owners are allowed to post larger directional signage that's visible from public streets as there does not appear to be anything exceptional about the property.



View from SE Crosswinds Drive Showing the Permitted Monument Sign

Additionally, variance requests for directional signs are not something that the Zoning Board of Adjustment has typically considered in the past. Variances to the sign Code have been approved by the Board on occasion, however, those circumstances have typically been related to off-site signage for properties that have limited visibility along public streets. If the Board were to consider approving the variance for the proposed signs, it would be of staff's preference that the signs be reduced to their smallest possible size and that the Amazon Delivery logo be removed, as it is not the intent of the sign Code to have logos posted on directional signs. As is standard procedure for all variance requests, property owners within 250' of the subject property were notified of the request by mail, and to date, staff has not received any correspondence either for or against the variance.

The staff position is to deny a variance to Ankeny Municipal Code Section 195.03(3)(A) allowing three separate twenty square-foot directional signs along SE Crosswinds Drive at 7310 SE Crosswinds Drive. Staff's position is based on a determination that the shape or shallowness of the subject property is not exceptional, extraordinary situations do not exist, and the oversized directional signs are not in harmony with the intended spirit and purpose of the Ankeny Municipal Code.