

# STAFF REPORT

## Derby Review Board

**Meeting Date:** April 18, 2017

**Case Planner:** Caitlin Long

**Case #:** DRB-061-17

**Location:** 7390 Highway 2, Commerce City, CO 80022

**Applicant/  
Owner:** Werthwhile Inn, Inc./Beverly VanDeWeghe  
2400 East 121<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Thornton, CO 80241

**Request:**

1. The applicant is requesting Derby Review Board approval of 2 proposed business signs.
2. The applicant is requesting the Derby Review Board approval of \$250 in catalyst funds.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff is recommending approval of the proposed sign and catalyst fund request as the proposed signage meets the design principles of the Derby Design Guidelines and the requirements of the Land Development Code.

**Current Zone District:** PUD (Planned Unit Development District)

**Comp Plan Designation:** Commercial/Mixed Use

### Surroundings

<u>Existing Land Use</u>		<u>Occupant</u>	<u>Zoning</u>
<b>North</b>	Right of Way	Adjacent to Highway 2 and Magnolia Street	ROW
<b>South</b>	Commercial	United States Post Office	PUD
<b>East</b>	Commercial	Joe's Auto Service	PUD
<b>West</b>	Right-of-Way	Adjacent to Highway 2	ROW

### Background Information

City Council approved PUD zoning for the Derby area in September 2007. The zoning supports the Derby Master Plan by designating the district as a mixed-use commercial district. The PUD boundaries are East 72<sup>nd</sup> Avenue to the south, Highway 2 to the west, and Magnolia Street to the east. Building improvements, demolition and construction within this geographic area are subject to review by the Derby Review Board.

The subject property is located on the west side of Magnolia Street along Highway 2. The applicant is the owner of the subject property. The entire lot area is approximately .24 of an acre and contains a single-story commercial building. The commercial building is approximately 1,740-square-feet with building frontage on both Highway 2 and Magnolia Street. The subject property is designated as commercial/mixed-use and is legally conforming.

In 2010, through Case DRB-020-10, the applicant received from the Derby Review Board approval for a building remodel, building addition, landscape improvements, and new signage. Although the Board approved these requests, the modifications to the building were never applied for and the approval subsequently lapsed. In April 2016, through case DRB-055-16, the applicant received approval of new signage, along with catalyst funds for the new sign.

### Summary of Applicant's Request

The applicant is requesting to build upon the theme of the previously approved business sign by painting wall sign murals on two exterior walls (one facing west along Highway 2 and one facing east along Magnolia Street) to better identify this business during daytime hours. The applicant states that their

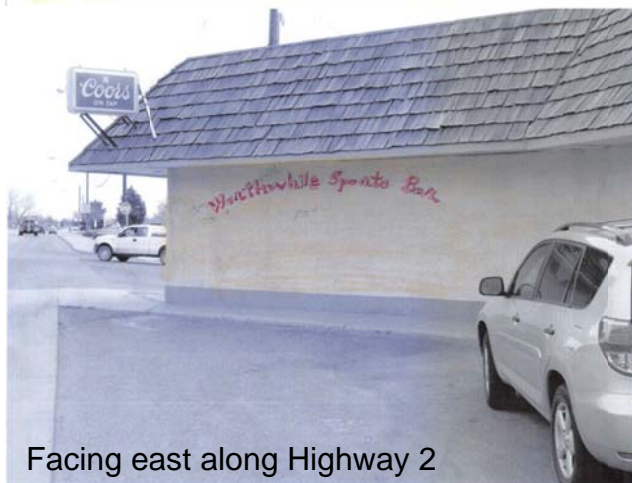
new neon-style sign has significantly improved visibility at night. The proposed sign paintings will each be approximately 10 feet long and 10 inches high on the existing stucco walls. They will utilize the same script font and colors to match the existing illuminated sign and the 1950's theme found within the Derby Downtown District. The only other sign, a beer sign, will not be affected by this application. Below is the current and proposed sign:

**Existing Signage:**

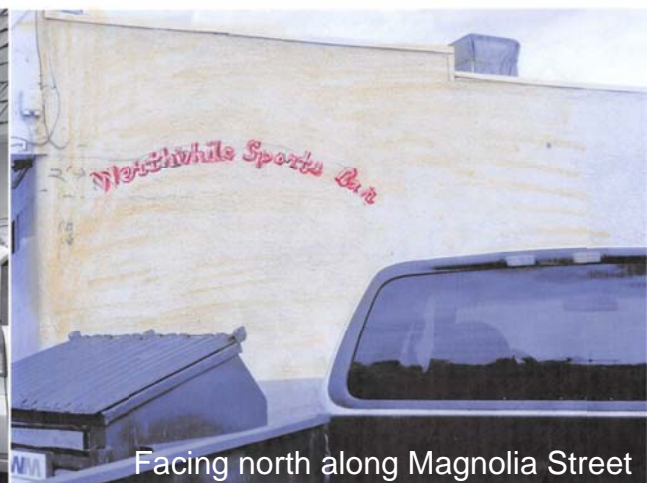


Facing east along Highway 2

**Proposed Signage:**



Facing east along Highway 2



Facing north along Magnolia Street

## Staff Analysis

The applicant's request for new individual business signage has been reviewed by staff in conformance with the Derby Sub-Area Master Plan, the Derby Design Guidelines, PUD Zone Document and the Land Development Code (LDC). As part of this analysis, staff reviewed the building history, architectural character of the subject building, and the architectural context of the surrounding buildings and properties in order to establish sufficient detail for design review of the proposed signage.

The requested signs match the existing sign on the building and help to more clearly identify the use of the facility. They meet the design elements (red and neon-style) that are harmonious with the Derby Design Guidelines. Lastly, the applicant is requesting catalyst funds in an amount not to exceed \$250 for the proposed signage.

### Building History

The subject property is located on a corner lot within the Derby Downtown District. The applicant is the property owner of the subject building. According to the Adams County Assessor's records, the subject building was constructed in 1933. The building itself is approximately 1,740-square-feet.

### Architectural Character

The subject building's architecture has been influenced by the Modern/International style that is found throughout Derby. These architectural styles are defined by the large use of concrete or masonry. Often this style of architecture was utilized to construct buildings with a focus on function rather than form. The image in Figure 1 of the subject building clearly shows that the character of the building has only been influenced by Modern/International architectural styles and is not a complete match. This architectural style was prominent across the United States in the 1950s and '60s. Although not known for certain, it can be assumed that the exterior of the building has changed throughout the decades to reflect the nature of the District. To the east and the south are buildings that were constructed within the 1940s and 1950s and reflect a similar Modern/International architectural style.

Figure 1: Subject Building



### Surrounding Properties

The subject building is adjacent to both the Magnolia Street and Highway 2 rights-of-way. As previously noted, the adjacent buildings were constructed at a later time and are built in the same architectural style as the subject building. Figures 2 and 3 show the adjacent buildings to the subject property.



**Figure 2: Post Office to the South**



**Figure 3: Buildings to the East across Magnolia Street**



Although the architectural styles throughout the Derby District vary and are not all a match with the subject property, the variety of styles tell the story of commercial development within the Derby Downtown District. Additionally, the subject building is bordered by two buildings that match the architectural style. This context has been considered by staff and is important to the review of the proposed signage, as well as the unique character of the Derby District as a whole.

In Derby, proposed projects are evaluated by their conformance with applicable guidelines and codes. The Derby Design Guidelines contain design-related criteria to govern how well a project aligns with its goals. The Derby PUD contains the regulations that dictate what land uses are allowed in addition to performance standards for the zoning. Finally, The Commerce City Land Development Code provides the regulating framework for specific development standards that govern physical characteristics of a project before construction or installation. The proposed sign has been reviewed against the approval criteria within the Land Development Code and were found to be in compliance with all applicable standards.

### **Composition of Derby Design Guidelines**

The Derby Design Guidelines utilize standards and principles to determine which design criteria must be followed (standards) and which design criteria is desired, but not required (principles).

**Standards:** Objective criteria providing specific direction based on the Guideline Goals, used to define issues considered critical to achieving the Guideline Goals. Standards use the term “shall” to indicate that compliance is mandatory unless it can be demonstrated that an acceptable alternative meets one or more of the following conditions:

1. The alternative better achieves the Guideline Goals
2. The Guideline Goals will not be achieved by application of the Standard in the circumstance
3. The effect of other Standards or Principles will be improved by not applying this Standard
4. Unique site factors make the Standard impractical.

**Principles:** Statements of non-binding policy, explanation or direction to assist the city planning office and applicant with application of standards. Principles use the term “should” to express desired outcomes.

### **Conformance with the Derby Design Guidelines**

The term “Googie architecture” is a form of modern architecture, a subdivision of futurist architecture influenced by car culture, the Space Age, and the Atomic Age. Originating in Southern California during the late 1940s and continuing approximately into the mid-1960s, Googie-themed architecture was popular among motels, coffee houses, and gas stations.

The applicant has expressed an interest in wall signage that is in alignment with the Derby Design Guidelines. The proposed signage meets the standards of the Derby Design Guidelines through the use of the script font that can be seen in other signage examples from the 1950s. Furthermore, the proposed signage accomplishes greater daytime business identification for the applicant and has an appearance that matches the exaggerated curves in the font choice of the new neon-style lighted sign. Among the various criteria used to analyze new commercial signage in Derby, the applicant’s proposed sign meets the following principles:

- Certain shapes
  - The proposed signs incorporate a unique script font aligns with the principles of the Derby Design Guidelines and is a staple of the Googie style.
  - The proposed signs incorporate a neon-style appearance and red colors which are prominent in the Derby Design Guidelines.
- Signs should avoid obscuring architectural details.
  - The proposed locations of the signs contribute to a more vibrant façade of the building while providing better identification of the building from adjacent streets. The architectural features of the building continue to be prominently visible from the public right-of-way, and the enhanced features of the 1950s style signage capture the theme for Derby.
  - The proposed signs are not illuminated, and therefore will not conflict with other properties in the district.

### **Derby Design Guidelines -- Goals for this Application:**

#### **Goal #3: Enhance Derby’s visibility and identity through:**

- **Unique business identification**
- **Adopting consistent and compatible signage**

#### **Goal #4: Revitalize Derby through:**

- **Support and promotion of new businesses and property owners**

### **Conformance with the Derby PUD Zone Document**

The Derby PUD is a custom zoning designation produced specifically for the Derby Downtown District. The zoning establishes a mixed-use zone district comprised of commercial and residential land uses. In addition to establishing the parameters of the Derby Sub Area, the zone document primarily outlines the allowed land uses within the district. Designated on the Derby Master Plan as a commercial/mixed-use property, the applicant's proposed event center is considered a legal, conforming use in Derby.

### **Final Analysis**

The Werthwhile Inn site is located at a highly visible corner of Derby and essentially is the northern cornerstone of the district. With this in mind, the proposed painted signs are designed to advance the existing 1950s Derby theme present in the signage on the subject building, and will enhance the aesthetic appeal of this specific location.

City staff concludes that the proposed signage is harmonious with the principles of the Derby Design Guidelines and fulfills the goals of the redevelopment program. Specifically, the proposed signs utilize a unique font that promotes the goals of the Derby Design Guidelines. The proposed signage is both an improvement to the building façade and to the Derby Downtown District, as it represents the 1950s theme. Finally, the proposed sign represents the work between the applicant and city staff to highlight an existing business in the Derby Downtown District.

As a result, the Planning Division recommends **approval** of the request. However, the Board has several options to choose from in making a decision:

1. The Board can choose to approve the proposed sign design and catalyst funds as presented;
2. The Board can choose not to approve the proposed sign design and catalyst funds;
3. The Board can recommend approval with changes made to the proposed sign design and catalyst fund request and to work with the Planning staff to finalize the approval; or
4. The Board can recommend changes be made to the proposed sign design and ask that the applicant present a modified design to the Board at a subsequent DRB meeting.

### Staff Recommendation

**Recommended Motion:** “Based upon the finding that the application meets the design principles of the Derby Design Guidelines, I move that the Derby Review Board grant approval in case DRB-061-17, a Derby Redevelopment application for the property located at 7390 Highway 2.”

**Recommended Catalyst Fund Motion:** “I move that the Derby Review Board approve the use of catalyst funds in an amount not to exceed **\$250.00** to reimburse the applicant for costs the City determines qualify under the program.”

**Advisory:** The applicant shall comply with the Land Development Code requirements pertaining to signage and obtain an approved sign permit from the Community Development Department prior to installation of any signage.

### Alternative Motions

**Approval with Conditions Motion:** “Based upon the findings that the application meets the design standards and principles of the Derby Design Guidelines, I move that the Derby Review Board grant approval in case DRB-061-17 subject to conditions and one advisory, a Derby Redevelopment application for the property located at 7390 Highway 2.”

List conditions

**Amended Catalyst Fund Motion:** “I move that the Derby Review Board approve an amended amount of catalyst funds in an amount not to exceed \$\_\_\_\_\_ to reimburse the applicant for costs the City determines qualify under the program.”

**Denial Motion:** “Based upon the finding that the application does not meet the design standards and principles of the Derby Design Guidelines, I move that the Derby Review Board **deny** case DRB-061-17, a Derby Redevelopment application for the property located at 7390 Highway 2.”

**Denial Catalyst Fund Motion:** “I move that the Derby Review Board **deny** the use of catalyst funds.”

### Attachments

Please see the following pages for illustrations and plans of the proposed project which include:

- Location within the Derby Downtown District
- Aerial view of site

## Location within the Derby Downtown District:

Subject Property





Aerial view of site:

