

## **STAFF REPORT**

**Case Number:** 20-ZA-09

**Request:** Conduct a public hearing and consider a request for amending Planned Development District No. 86 (PD-86) including but not limited to modifying signage regulations, approximately 143.39 acres generally bounded by: Havenhurst Street on the north; Harry Hines Boulevard/IH35 frontage road on the west; Farmers Branch Lane on the south; Rawhide Creek, Valley View Lane, and the rear property line of properties on Nestle Street on the east; and take appropriate action.

**Applicant:** City of Farmers Branch

**Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting:** August 31, 2020

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### **Background:**

This zoning request is a city-initiated amendment to Planned Development District No. 86 (PD-86), also known as the Station Area Code. The purpose of this request is to amend Chapter V. Architectural Standards to allow identification signs and murals, and amend Chapter VII. Definitions of the Station Area Code in order to define murals.

The Station Area Code currently does not allow for identification signs or murals. The development of multi-tenant and mixed-use developments within the Station Area, such as the Shops at Mustang Station, has brought to light the need for identification signs so that these developments can advertise at an appropriate pedestrian scale. Murals are also not currently permitted within the Station Area since painted wall signs are prohibited. Businesses have expressed an interest in developing murals within the district, and the proposed amendment will allow businesses to develop murals, support Council's vision for the development of the Station Area as an arts and cultural district, as well as contribute to the development of a vibrant pedestrian environment within the Station Area.

The proposed amendments allowing for identification signs and murals within the Station Area will add variation and diversity to the streetscape and enhance the pedestrian environment. A vibrant pedestrian environment is an objective for the area identified in both the Station Area Code and the Central Area Plan, and approval of the proposed amendments will support the vision of both plans.

### **Existing Zoning:**

The Station Area Code was adopted in 2005 and has been amended subsequently in order to facilitate development within the area. The Station Area Code is a form-based code, in which standards are set to emphasize physical form, providing for a more predictable built environment and streetscape. The code outlines that signs located within the Station Area should be clear and

informative. In addition, the code states that signage is desirable for advertising Station Area shops and offices, and as decoration, signs within the Station Area should be scaled to the nature of the district –mixed-use, pedestrian oriented, with slow-moving automobile traffic.

Currently, Chapter V., Section F. of the Station Area Code provides requirements for signs located within the Station Area, such as wall signs and blade signs. Except for properties with I-35E frontage, Section F. prohibits monument signs of which identification signs are a type of monument sign. Chapter V., Section F. also prohibits signs that are painted on the exterior walls of buildings. This would, in most cases, prohibit the installation of murals.

### **Proposed Amendment:**

Staff is proposing to amend Chapter V., Section F. Signage, and Chapter VII. Definitions. The proposed amendments will facilitate identification signs and murals that meet the spirit and intent of the Station Area Code.

#### *Identification Signs:*

The addition of the text below to Chapter V., Section F. is proposed in order to define and regulate identification signs within the Station Area:

Identification signs which, by means of symbol or name, identifies a shopping center, commercial development, or other development that may contain a mixture of residential and/or non-residential uses but does not identify individual tenants, are permitted. Identification signs shall be free standing monument signs with a maximum area of 60 square feet and a maximum height of 8 feet. Landscaping shall be provided around the sign base. A maximum of one identification sign may be located at each main point of entry into the development.

This amendment will allow identification signs to be placed at the major entranceways to multi-tenant developments. The signs will be permitted to advertise the development but will not be permitted to advertise individual tenants. Signs shall be free standing and no larger than 60 square feet in total area and 8 feet in height; this size restriction will ensure that the pedestrian scale desired within the Station Area is maintained.

#### *Murals:*

The addition of the text below to Chapter V., Section F. is proposed in order to regulate murals within the Station Area:

One mural may be installed, per building, and shall cover only one façade of that building. Murals shall not include the name of any product, company, logos or names of any business entity nor illustrate any activities, merchandise or services of the business occupying the building on which the mural is applied. A mural may wrap around the corner to an adjacent façade of the same building, subject to approval of a special exception as provided for in this ordinance.

As stated above, one mural per building will be permitted and murals will be prohibited from containing any type of advertisement for a business or product. The reason for this restriction is to prevent businesses from attempting to circumvent the wall signage regulations (i.e. maximum eight square feet total, and maximum two feet in height) and advertising their business in the form of a mural.

The proposed amendment allowing murals will support Council's vision for the Station Area as an arts and cultural district in Farmers Branch, and contribute to enhancing the pedestrian environment in keeping with the intent of the Station Area Code and the Central Area Plan.

#### *Prohibited Signs:*

The following amendments to Chapter V., Section F. Prohibited Signs are necessary in order to accommodate the proposed identification signs and murals:

Prohibited Signs: Billboards, free-standing pole signs, monument signs (except in I-35E area **or when used as an identification sign**), marquees, any kind of animation, roof and painted window signs, and signs painted on the exterior walls of buildings are prohibited (**except murals**). No flashing, traveling, animated, or intermittent lighting shall be on the exterior of any building whether such lighting is of temporary or long-term duration. Portable or wheeled signs and advertising devices located outside any building are not allowed, pursuant to City regulations.

The addition of the text (in red above) ensures that there is clarity between the regulations for identification signs and murals versus prohibited signs. This ensures ease of interpretation and implementation of the Station Area Code.

#### *Chapter VII. Definitions:*

The addition of the text below is proposed for Chapter VII., Definitions, in order to define murals:

##### **MURAL**

**Any mosaic, painting, or graphic art or combination thereof which is professionally applied to a building that does not include the name of any product, company, logos or names of any business entity, nor illustrates any activities, merchandise or services of the business occupying the building of which the mural is applied.**

The addition of this definition will aid in the interpretation and implementation of the regulations with regard to murals.

#### **Comprehensive Plan Recommendation:**

The subject area is located within the Central Area Plan, adopted in 2012, and is designated as the DART Station District within the Plan. Additionally, the Station Area Conceptual Master Plan was

adopted for the subject area in 2002 and later revised in 2012 that set a guide specifically for the development and redevelopment of all properties within the Station Area.

The DART Station District is guided by the 2012 Conceptual Master Plan. The intention of the plan is to create a more urban, walkable neighborhood that would serve and function as a vibrant core of Farmers Branch. A broad mix of uses is anticipated within the DART Station Area including retail, residential, office and public space. The area will serve as a more urban, pedestrian friendly environment.

At the time the Central Area Plan was written, much of the DART Station Area was vacant or underdeveloped, with several auto related buildings and commercial buildings in poor condition. A new urban core is envisioned for this area and recent development near the Station Area is leading the way. The Station Area has recently experienced a surge in redevelopment of residential and retail uses that are furthering the goals of creating a walkable, urban center of the City.

The proposed amendment to allow for identification signs and murals thereby furthers the goals of the Central Area Plan and Conceptual Master Plan by allowing for additional methods of signage that will enhance the pedestrian environment.



### **Public Response:**

A public notification letter was mailed to 256 property owners within PD-86, within 200 feet of the subject area, and to the Carrollton-Farmers Branch and Dallas Independent School Districts on August 21, 2020. Five zoning notification signs were posted throughout the district on the same day. Staff has received no letters in opposition to the proposed amendment.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed zoning request as presented.