



**Design Review Board (DRB)
Staff Report**

Signage

Case # 20-20: Memphis Health Center
360 E.H Crump Blvd
Memphis, TN 38126

Applicant: Frank Balton Sign Co.
5385 Pleasant View
Memphis, TN 38134

Background: This application is for a monument sign with an Electronic Message Center to be installed at 360 E.H. Crump. Applications for signage in the Central Business Improvement District are typically approved administratively by Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) staff. However, the subject sign does not conform to the requirements of the Downtown Sign Code, and cannot be approved administratively. The applicant is submitting this sign application to the DRB in order to receive an exception from code requirements.

Project Description: The proposed sign is a monument sign composed of a double-faced LED Electronic Message Center (EMC) mounted on top of a brick base. The EMC measures 7.25 feet. (w) by 3.4 feet (h), while the brick base measures 7.25 feet (w) by 3.75 feet (h). The total area of the sign's face is approximately 51.96 square feet, and the total height of the sign is 7.16 feet. The depth of the brick base is 18 inches, while the depth of the EMC is 14 inches. The sign is positioned near the southwest corner of the Memphis Health Center building at 360 E.H. Crump, near the entrance to the building's parking lot.

Staff Report: There are two areas where the proposed signage does not conform to the Downtown Sign Code: the sign's size, and the presence of an EMC.

The Downtown Sign Code does not contain any mention of EMCs, either allowing or expressly forbidding them. It may be possible to view EMCs as a form of changeable copy, which is not permitted on ground signs. However, the board has reviewed EMCs on a case by case basis in the past, and some have received board approval. An example can be found near the current applicant's

property in front of Massa Liquors at 791 S. B.B. King Blvd. This sign was approved by the DRB at its October 5, 2011 meeting.

In addition to the EMC, the proposed sign does not conform to code requirements for sign size. The Downtown Sign Code limits monument signs to 35 square feet in total area, and 6 feet in height. The proposed sign is over these limits, at over 7 feet in height, and 51 square feet in area.

Although the Downtown Sign code does not include EMCs as an allowable sign feature, the DRB has not interpreted the code's silence as an absolute ban, and has approved similar signs in the past. In the view of DMC staff, it would be reasonable for the board to approve a sign with an EMC at the proposed location. However, there is not a compelling reason to also waive the clear requirements of the code regarding the size of monument signs.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends conditional approval, with the condition that the applicant revise the size of the signage to be in line with Downtown Sign Code requirements for monument signs