



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

Signage

Case # 20-44R1: Cossitt Library Exterior Signage  
33 S. Front St  
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Balton Sign Co.  
7801 Moriarty Rd  
Memphis, TN 38018

Background: This application is for a new monument sign at the Cossitt Library, which is being installed as a part of the library's extensive renovation. The Design Review Board previously approved plans for a monument sign at this location. However, the applicant has altered the sign's design to bring it line with the standard Memphis Library branch signage. Because the revised design is a substantial change from the approved sign in terms of scale and style, it is being presented to Board for approval again.

Project Description: The proposed sign is a double-sided aluminum monument sign measuring a total of 55 in. (h) by 75 in. (w), with a depth of six inches. The sign is vertically divided into the following components, starting from the base:

- Sign base: 16.5 in. (h) by 75 in. (w)
- Red accent trim: 3 in. (h) by 72 in. (w)
- Primary sign panel: 35.5 in. (h) by 75 in. (2)

The primary panel contains the following components:

- A 16.5 in. (h) by 73 in. (w) face-lit panel reading "MEMPHIS PUBLIC LIBRARES COSSITT BRANCH," and featuring the Memphis Library logo. The sign copy and logo will be vinyl graphics applied to the panel.
- A 12 in. (h) by 72 in. (w) monochrome digital display that can display custom messages.

Key differences between the original sign and the currently proposed sign are outlined in the table below:

	<b>Original</b>	<b>Currently Proposed</b>
<b>Height</b>	75.75 in.	55 in.
<b>Width</b>	190 in.	75 in.
<b>Total Area</b>	99.9 sq. ft.	18.22 sq ft.
<b>EMC Dimensions</b>	36 in. (h) by 28 in (w)	12 in. (h) by 72 in. (w)

**Staff Report:**

The original monument sign presented three different code issues: the size of the sign, the fact that it was located in a district that does not typically allow monument signs, and the presence of a digital LED display element. However, the revised sign now conforms to the size limits for monument signs outlined by the Downtown Sign Code, eliminating that particular issue. Regarding the remaining issues, staff’s recommendation for approval still stands, with the same rationale.

The Cossitt Library is located in the Gayoso-Peabody / Cotton Row district defined by the Sign Code. The district-specific standards for this area do not allow any ground signs, other than temporary sandwich-board signs. But the sign is a replacement for a previous monument sign on the same site, and other adjacent public buildings also feature prominent monument signage. For these reasons, staff deems the sign type appropriate for its immediate context and building type.

Because digital displays are not addressed by the sign code, the Board has typically reviewed applications including digital signage elements, rather than allowing for administrative approval. Previously adopted guidance on digital signage has recommended allowing for digital signage in areas where other ground signs (such as monument signs) have been permitted, or where changeable copy signs have been permitted. It is worth noting that the previous monument signage at the Cossitt (as with other Memphis Library locations) featured changeable copy.

Despite these departures from code standards, DRB staff continues to be supportive of the signage as submitted. The new design does not present any more problems with code requirements than the original sign approved by the Board. In fact, it reduces these issues by bringing the size of the sign in line with Downtown Sign Code requirements for monument signs.

**Staff Recommendation:** **Staff recommends approval.**