



**VALDOSTA-LOWNDES COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
**Staff Report - MEETING DATE: October 3, 2017**

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**VAR-2017-17**  
**Budd Billboards**  
**North Valdosta Road, Valdosta, Georgia**

Budd Billboards is proposing to modify an existing nonconforming off-premise sign. The subject property consists of ~10 acres, and is located at 3996 North Valdosta Road, in a C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning district.

Section 5.04.09 (D) contained in the ULDC provides regulations regarding Non-Interstate Off-Site Signs on State-Maintained Roads. Specific to this Variance, the current sign is considered a nonconforming sign for which the applicant would like to modify. The ULDC section reads “*no structural repairs or changes in the size of shape of a sign shall be permitted except to make the sign comply with the requirements of this ULDC.*” In this case, Budd Billboards is proposing to replace the bottom sign faces with a digital sign face. The current bottom sign area measures 10’ x 30’ (300 square feet) at about 55’ in height. The proposed bottom sign area sign area will be the same size as the current, at the same nonconforming height. Because of the existing sign’s current nonconforming status, the applicant is unable to make the proposed modifications without the success of a Variance. **Therefore, a Variance is being requested to modify a nonconforming sign.**

The subject property is located in the Urban Service Area and within a Community Activity Center (CAC) Character Area on the Future Development Map of the Comprehensive Plan. This portion of North Valdosta Road is mostly developed with commercial uses on both sides of the corridor. This area is expected to continue its commercial development pattern given the existing infrastructure (i.e. roads, water/sewer, etc) and current commercial zoning. The CAC Character Area is the focal point for neighborhoods to provide a concentration of activities such as general retail, service commercial, office professional, higher-density housing, and appropriate public and open space uses that are easily accessible by pedestrians.

The subject property is located on a state maintained road, and is protected under the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) rules/regulations as they pertain to the Federal Highway Beautification Act and the Georgia Outdoor Advertising Control Act. The current off-premise sign has been in place for a number of years (prior to the ULDC adoption), was legally established, and has current Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) permits. The applicant’s GDOT permits have been approved for the proposed modifications. Locally, the sign’s nonconformity exists in the sign’s orientation (i.e. double-stacked), overall height, and its proximity from other off-site signs. Ideally, it is the intent for the nonconforming regulations to allow nonconformities to continue until they are removed or discontinued, and to discourage nonconformities to be enlarged or expanded upon. While the proposed changes will not enlarge or expand the current sign faces, the debate among staff is the potential impact that the digital face may have in this area. One appear to be an improvement aesthetically if the applicant is willing to remove the top sign face in lieu of having a double stacked sign. Staff reviewed this Variance request and is ultimately recommending approval given the sign structure is already in place. Overall, the TRC concluded that the continued use of the existing sign was not out of character with the area nor would the proposed modifications appear to negatively affect adjacent properties. Ultimately, the TRC reviewed the Variance request, and is recommending of its approval as presented (replacement of two 10’x30’ sign faces with two 10’x30’ digital faces; sign structure overall height of 55’).