

The 'Total Look' Permit

In Fall 2002, Esther Garcia Southwest Key Program, Inc. A Texas Corporation, applied to have property at 11643 Vance Jackson Road, which is near Orsinger, rezoned from "MF-33" Multi Family District to "C-1" Commercial District.

Case number Z2002199 was assigned to this application. The City's Zoning commission met on October 15, 2002.

Zoning staff briefed that the subject property was a vacant house that fronted on Vance Jackson Road, a major thoroughfare, and had existing "MF-33" zoning to the north and east and a single-family subdivision to the south. Staff recommended retention of the current multi-family zoning of "MF-33", but with a Conditional Use for a beauty salon. In the Staff's judgment, "MF-33 C" was compatible and appropriate at this location and would not adversely affect the surrounding area.

One condition was recommended: Signage shall not exceed 3 square feet in area and be attached to the front of the main structure. The Zoning board accepted staff recommendations.

Since 2002, the VJ neighborhood association has found enforcement of the simple sign restriction to be problematic. Our City Councilman and the Sign Inspection offices have been considerate and responsible, but definitions of what constitutes a sign, versus a 'structure' or 'decoration', are not clear-cut, if you forgive the pun.

The lessons learned for the association have been: special permits are never as simple as they appear; consider all contingencies; and include airtight language to minimize ambiguity.