



To: Plan Commission

From: Daniel Ritter, AICP, Community Development Director
Atefa Ghaznawi, AICP, LEED AP, City Planner

Date: April 9, 2026

Re: 905 Theodore Street, Special Use for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility (Case # SU-26-3-4-1); and Variations Request from the City of Crest Hill Sign Code for an Existing On-Premises Free-Standing Sign (Case # V-26-3-4-1) (last revised 04-06-2026)

Project Details

Project:	Special Use for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility and Variations Request from the City of Crest Hill Sign Code for an Existing On-Premises Free-Standing Sign.
Applicant:	Jorge Cruz
Requests:	Special approvals from the City of Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance, and City Code for a Special Use for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility; and Variations from Section 15.12.080 Signs in Business Districts, Chapter 15.12 of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances-Sign Code to increase permitted sign area from 50 sq-ft to 89 sq-ft, increase permitted digital sign area from 20 sq-ft to 54 sq-ft, increase permitted sign height from 15 feet to 21 feet, and decrease the required setback from the property line from 10 feet to 3 feet for an existing on-premises free-standing sign.
Location:	905 Theodore Street (the "Subject Property")

Site Details

Lot Size:	Approximately 2.23 acres
Existing Zoning:	B-2 General Business District
Existing Improvements:	Approx. 18,500 SF existing one-story commercial building, and two existing parking lots and driveways

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use Summary

	Land Use	Comp Plan	Zoning
Subject Parcels	Commercial/ the old Bowling Alley	Local Commercial	B-2
North	Single-Family Detached Residence	Single-Family Detached	R-1
South	Single-Family Detached Residence (City of Joliet)	City of Joliet	R-2
East	Single-Family Detached Residence, Church, and Commercial	Single-Family Detached, Community Facilities, and Local Commercial	R-1 and B-1
West	Single-Family Detached Residence	Single-Family Detached	R-1

Exhibits

Application documents submitted by Applicant include:

1. Exhibit C – Application for Development 2026-01-14
2. Exhibit D – Legal Description 2026-03-04
3. Exhibit E – Plat of Survey 2026-03-04
4. Exhibit F – Photos of Existing Condition 2026-03-04
5. Exhibit G – List of Requested Variations 2026-03-04
6. Exhibit H – Project Narrative 2026-03-27
7. Exhibit I – Response to Standards for Special Use 2026-03-09
8. Exhibit J – Site Plan, Landscape Plan and Architectural Plans, by MTZ Architect Inc. last revised 2026-03-12
9. Exhibit K – Proposed Sign by US Sign & Electric LLC, last revised 2026-03-12

Application Background and Project Summary

Jorge Cruz (the Applicant) is looking to purchase, renovate, and reoccupy an existing vacant commercial property (formerly known as Crest Hill Bowling Lanes and Keglers Pub) located at 905 Theodore Street, which has been vacant since 2020. The Applicant is requesting approval of a Special Use Permit for Play Time Soccer, an indoor soccer sports training and recreational facility, along with a restaurant that will operate daily to serve facility participants and the surrounding community. Jorge Cruz and his family have been Crest Hill residents since 2005 and have been operating their business in a small space in Hillcrest Shopping Center (1701 N Larkin Ave, Unit 101) in the City for several years.

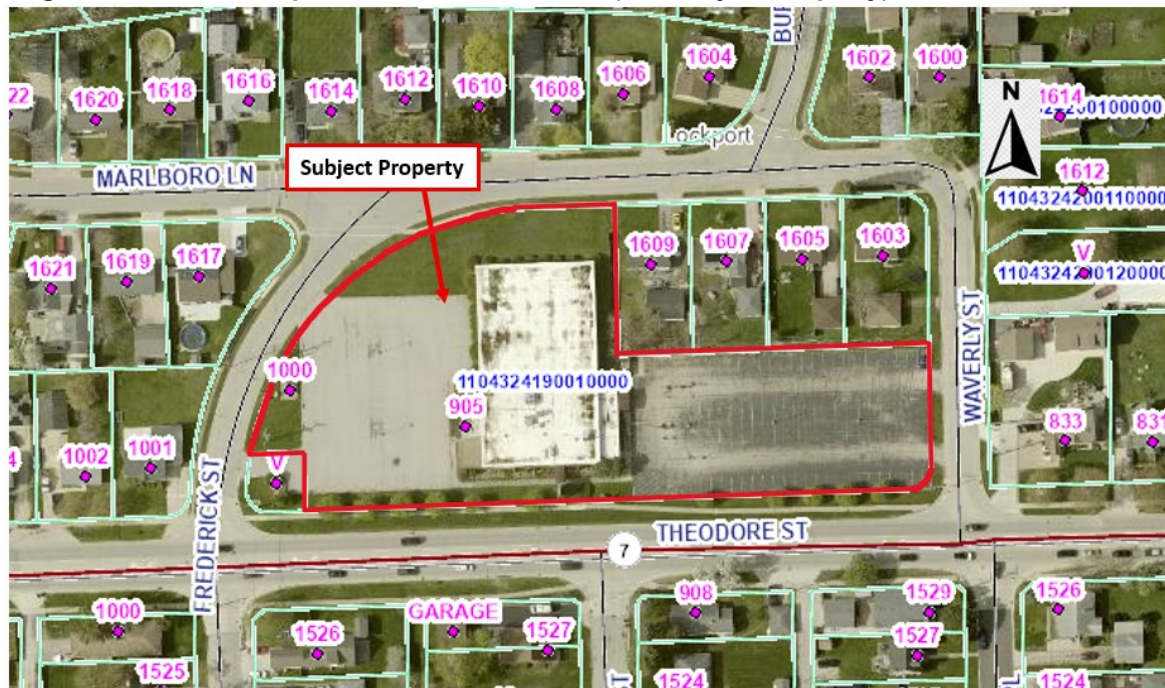
Play Time Soccer will operate as an indoor soccer sports facility designed to provide athletic training, recreational leagues, youth development programming, and community-based sporting events. The facility will accommodate individuals, teams, and organized programs for various age groups and skill levels, with a focus on promoting health, physical activity, and youth engagement.

Hours of operation for the Indoor Soccer Sports Facility (Play Time Soccer) will be Monday – Sunday 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM.

The property will also include a restaurant that will serve food and beverages to athletes, families, visitors, and members of the general public. The restaurant will operate as a complementary use to the sports facility while remaining open to the public daily. The restaurant will operate as an American-style bar and grill, offering freshly prepared food made from scratch. The facility also plans to offer sports nutrition-friendly items, including protein-focused meals, hydration beverages, and recovery-friendly food selections designed to support active individuals and youth athletes. Hours of operation for the Restaurant will be Monday – Sunday, 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM.

The proposed project will provide recreational opportunities for youth and adults while promoting health, fitness, and community engagement. Play Time Soccer is intended to serve as a safe, family-oriented environment for sports development, teamwork, and social interaction. The restaurant component will enhance the overall customer experience while contributing to the local economy through job creation and increased visitation to the City of Crest Hill.

Figure 1: Location Map of 905 Theodore Street (the Subject Property)



Proposed Improvements

- Interior Improvements:** Remove the existing bowling alley lanes and associated equipment; renovate the interior space to accommodate two regulation-size indoor soccer fields, including appropriate flooring, field markings, safety netting, and spectator viewing areas as needed; and convert the existing bar area within the former bowling alley section into a concession counter for the sale of snacks and non-alcoholic beverages.
- Exterior Improvements:** Mill, resurface, and restripe the east parking lot to improve traffic flow, safety, and overall appearance; repair and reinforce existing fencing along the east parking lot; Install new fencing and/or landscape screening along the west parking lot to minimize headlight glare impacting neighboring residences; upgrade side

and rear landscaping with refreshed plant materials and modern design elements to enhance curb appeal; update monument and building sign panels with contemporary finishes and materials; add decorative landscaping around signage to improve visibility and aesthetic appeal; replace worn and/or damaged awnings with new, updated materials and colors; sand, prime, and repaint all parking lot light poles to restore appearance and prevent corrosion; and install protective parking islands around light poles to reduce the risk of vehicle damage and improve durability.

Summary of Requested Petitions

The Applicant is seeking approval for the following petitions:

- (i) Special Use for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility
- (ii) Variations from Section 15.12.080 Signs in Business Districts, Chapter 15.12 of the [Crest Hill Code of Ordinances-Sign Code](#) to increase permitted sign area from 50 sq-ft to 89 sq-ft, increase permitted digital sign area from 20 sq-ft to 54 sq-ft, increase permitted sign height from 15 feet to 21 feet, and decrease the required setback from the property line from 10 feet to 3 feet for an existing on-premises free-standing sign.

Staff Analysis

Overall, the project represents the adaptive reuse of a vacant commercial building, which will replace underutilized and blighted conditions associated with prolonged vacancy with an active, well-maintained, supervised use that contributes positively to the neighborhood. The facility will maintain the existing building footprint and site layout, ensuring that it does not constrain future development patterns or infrastructure improvements in the area. As an indoor recreational use, it is comparable in intensity to other permitted commercial uses in the B-2 Zoning District and along Theodore Road, which has predominantly commercial uses. An Indoor Soccer Facility does not introduce conditions that would discourage investment of adjacent properties, and will promote further redevelopment within the area.

The indoor soccer activities will occur entirely within an enclosed structure, limiting noise and other off-site impacts. Any potential effects related to lighting, hours of operation, and customer activity will be effectively managed through their proposed business plan, limited hours of operation, and conditions for approval to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential uses. The restaurant component is a customary and complementary use that will operate in accordance with all applicable codes and regulations. The site has established access via existing public roadways, with ingress and egress points designed to safely accommodate anticipated traffic volumes, and on-site circulation and parking areas will continue to function adequately to serve patrons and employees. Additionally, the presence of a staffed, regularly occupied facility will enhance security and oversight of the property.

Site improvements are proposed that will allow the site and building to be improved and further reduce off-site impacts. This includes repairing and replacing adjacent fencing and installing new landscaping to lessen headlight glare and noise. Repaving, restriping, end islands, landscaping, and lighting repairs will enhance the look of the parking areas. The building's awning will be repaired and replaced, along with other repainting and repairs to any peeling paint or rusted areas on the building. The ground sign will be reused and refurbished to look more modern and updated, including a work LED message center.

Furthermore, the activation of a currently vacant site is expected to support continued reinvestment in the neighborhood by increasing activity, improving property maintenance, and enhancing overall marketability. The proposed use is consistent with surrounding commercial activities and is expected

to stabilize and potentially enhance nearby property values by revitalizing a vacant site and contributing to the economic vitality of the neighborhood.

The variation request for the existing on-premises free-standing sign, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. The proposed sign will identify an indoor soccer facility and restaurant operating within an existing commercial building, a use compatible with surrounding commercial and residential properties, and will facilitate the practical operation of the facility. The sign's size, placement, and design are modest and in keeping with the scale of neighboring commercial signage, ensuring it does not dominate or visually disrupt the streetscape. Granting the variation request will allow adequate visibility for the business to attract patrons without changing the overall appearance or character of the neighborhood.

Staff feedback on specific aspects of the requested approvals

- **Crest Hill Code of Ordinances Chapter 15.12 Sign Code, Section 15.12.080 (D)(1) Freestanding Signs in Business Districts:**

(b) Setback. All freestanding signs must maintain a setback of not less than ten feet from the property line. *The existing sign is located three feet from the property line.*

(c)-(d) Height and Sign Area. The maximum allowable area for freestanding signs for lots less than 5 acres is 50 square feet, and the maximum allowable sign height is 15 feet. *The existing sign height is 21 feet, The total area for the existing sign is 89 square feet (excluding the digital sign).*

(e) Electronic message center sign/changeable copy. In the case of electronic message center/changeable copy signs, the electronic message/changeable copy portion of the sign shall not exceed 20 square feet and will not be counted towards the area of the sign but will be included in the overall height. *The existing digital sign area is 54 square feet.*

Staff reviewed the proposed development with respect to the applicable City regulations. The Crest Hill Zoning Ordinance classifies Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facilities as Special Use in B-2 General Business District, and restaurants as permitted use in B-2 General Business District. The proposed Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility will require approval of a Special Use permit, and the above-mentioned variation(s).

Variation Approval Standards and Findings

Section 12.6-2 of the Zoning Ordinance states the Plan Commission shall recommend, and the City Council shall grant a variation only when it shall have been determined, and recorded in writing, that all of the following standards are complied with. Staff has drafted the following findings of fact identified in bold italic font. These drafted findings can be modified or changed as the Plan Commission deems fit and based on the specific findings from the public hearing.

1. That the property in question cannot yield a reasonable return if permitted to be used only under the conditions allowed by the regulations in that zone.
The property cannot yield a reasonable return if limited to the signage requirements currently allowed by the City of Crest Hill Sign Code. The vacant commercial property, intended to be used as an indoor soccer facility, relies on sufficient visibility and clear identification to attract patrons, including families, leagues, and community members. The existing sign regulations on sign size, height, placement prevent the existing sign from adequately promoting the business and making the property marketable. Without a variation to allow appropriate use of the existing

sign, the facility would be unable to operate successfully and generate a reasonable return, as restricted signage would limit public awareness and patronage while leaving the property underutilized.

2. That the plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances.
The plight of the owner is due to unique circumstances that justify the requested variation for the existing sign. The property is a vacant commercial building that has remained unoccupied since 2020 despite efforts to lease or sell it under typical zoning conditions. Its layout, location, and orientation make it particularly challenging for standard signage to provide adequate visibility to attract patrons for an indoor soccer facility.

These unique circumstances—specifically, the need for clear identification of a recreational facility that serves families and leagues and the limitations of the existing sign under current sign regulations—create an economic and operational hardship that is not generally shared by other properties in the B-2 Zoning District. Granting the variation will allow the property to be effectively utilized while preserving the overall character of the neighborhood.

3. That the variation, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.
The variation for the existing sign, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. The proposed sign will identify an indoor soccer facility and restaurant operating within an existing commercial building, a use compatible with surrounding commercial and residential properties. The sign’s size, placement, and design are modest and in keeping with the scale of neighboring commercial signage, ensuring it does not dominate or visually disrupt the streetscape.

Granting the variation will allow adequate visibility for the business to attract patrons without changing the overall appearance or character of the neighborhood. The use of the existing sign will facilitate the practical operation of the facility while maintaining harmony with the surrounding neighborhood.

In addition, Section 12.6-2 Standards for Variations and Section 12.7-6 Standards for Special Use of the Zoning Ordinance further suggest that the Plan Commission supplement the above standards by taking into consideration the extent to which the facts listed on Exhibit A and Exhibit B have been established by the evidence presented during the public hearing process and further support the approval of the Applicant’s requests. Please refer to Exhibit I for the Applicant’s response to Standards for Special Use.

Conditions of Approval (last revised 04-06-2026)

The plans submitted for building permits shall be in substantial compliance with the plans approved by the City Council and identified below, unless otherwise noted in the remaining conditions:

1. The following items shall be indicated on the permit and completed prior to occupancy of the business:
 - i. All proposed interior improvements shall be completed and in compliance with all building and fire code requirements.
 - ii. East parking lot shall be milled, resurfaced, and striped according to the plan, along with new end islands per the approved plan. The west parking lot shall be restriped with new end islands installed per the approved plan.

- iii. Existing fence on the north side of the east parking lot, bordering the residential properties, shall be repaired/replaced wherever worn or damaged. A 6-foot solid fence shall be required for the entirety of the special use.
2. Hours of operation for the indoor soccer facility shall be limited to Monday – Sunday: 9:00 AM – 12:00 AM.
3. Hours of operation for the restaurant shall be limited to Monday – Sunday: 7:00 AM – 11:00 PM.
4. Total occupancy for the entire facility shall be limited to no more than 200 people.
5. The Subject Property shall not be used as a banquet hall, convention center, or for any other special ticketed events. A separate Special Use permit shall be required for a change of use to expand the capacity of the venue, or to have any other events other than recreational indoor soccer.
6. The proposed indoor soccer facility and restaurant shall comply with Chapter 9.72 Curfews Applicable to Minors of the [City of Crest Hill Code of Ordinances](#).

Staff Recommendation

Based on the drafted findings reflected in this staff report, Staff recommend the following motion to provide a recommendation to the City Council. This motion may be amended by any Plan Commission member making the motion based upon the findings of the public hearing. Staff recommends that any motion be made in the positive form to correspond with the applicant's request to avoid confusion.

The Plan Commission recommends City Council conditional approval of the Special Use for an Indoor Recreational and Entertainment (Soccer) Facility, and Variations from Section 15.12.080 Signs in Business Districts, Chapter 15.12 of the Crest Hill Code of Ordinances-Sign Code to increase permitted sign area from 50 sq-ft to 89 sq-ft, increase permitted digital sign area from 20 sq-ft to 54 sq-ft, increase permitted sign height from 15 feet to 21 feet, and decrease the required setback from the property line from 10 feet to 3 feet for an existing on-premises free-standing sign, subject to the project being implemented in substantial conformance with the six (6) conditions for approval and application documents referenced in the April 9, 2026, Plan Commission Staff Report for petitions Case # SU-26-3-4-1, and Case # V-26-3-4-1.

EXHIBIT A**Supplemental Variation Approval Facts to Consider Per Zoning Ordinance Section 12.6-2**

1. *That the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical condition of the specific property involved will result in a particular hardship upon the owner, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of the regulations were carried out.*
2. *The conditions upon which the petition for a variation is based are unique to the property owner for which the variation is sought and are not applicable, generally, to the other property within the same zoning classification.*
3. *That the alleged difficulty or hardship is caused by the Ordinance and has not been created by any person presently having an interest in the property.*
4. *That the proposed variation will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property or substantially increase congestion in the public streets or increase the danger of fire, or endanger the public safety, or substantially diminish or impair property values within the adjacent neighborhood.*
5. *That the variation does not permit a use otherwise excluded from the particular zone except for uses authorized by the Plan Commission, subject to the approval of the City Council, as “similar and compatible uses.”*
6. *That the variation granted is the minimum adjustment necessary for the reasonable use of the land.*
7. *That the granting of any variation is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the Zoning Ordinance, and will not be injurious to the neighborhood, be detrimental to the public welfare, alter the essential character of the locality, or be in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan for development of the City.*
8. *That, for reasons fully set forth in the recommendations of the Plan Commission, and the report of the City Council, the aforesaid circumstances or conditions are such that the strict application of the provisions of the Zoning Ordinance deprives the applicant of any reasonable use of his land. Mere loss in value shall not justify a variation; there must be a deprivation of beneficial use of land.*

EXHIBIT B

Supplemental Special Use Approval Facts to Consider Per Zoning Ordinance Section 12.7-6

1. *That the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the special use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, or general welfare.*
2. *That the special use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor substantially diminish and impair property values within the neighborhood.*
3. *That the establishment of the special use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.*
4. *That adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and/or other necessary facilities have been or are being provided.*
5. *That adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designed as to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.*
6. *That special use shall in all other respects conform to the applicable regulations of this Ordinance and other applicable City regulations, except as such regulations may in each instance be modified by the City Council pursuant to the recommendation of the Plan Commission.*