

To: City of the Village of Douglas Planning Commission

Date: September 4, 2025

From: Sean Homyen, Planning & Zoning Administrator

RE: **453 Center St – Site Plan Review – Converting front portion of the home from a non-conforming use to a conforming use.**



The Village of Friendliness – Since 1870

Request. Andrea Johnson-Wardynski has submitted an application for site plan review under Section 24.01 for the conversion of the front portion of the home from a non-conforming use to a conforming use for the property at 453 Center St, located in the C-1 Village Commercial District.

Background. The property at 453 Center St is a two-story single-family home, currently zoned R-5. Based on the assessing records, the home was constructed in 1873. The applicant has inquired about opening an Italian shaving storefront at this location. Instead of waiting for the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to be updated. The applicant moved forward with what is allowed through the current ordinance. The applicant went through the process earlier this year by rezoning the property from R-5 Multiple Family District to C-1 Village Commercial District. A recommendation from the Planning Commission was received on February 20, 2025, and approval from Council was on April 7, 2025.



Procedure. The Planning Commission is tasked with reviewing the site plan providing an approval, with or without conditions, denial, or tabling of the request.

Previous Review. The Planning Commission considered this site plan at its August 14, 2025, meeting (see staff report dated August 6, 2025). At that time, concerns were raised regarding residential buffering, safety, and access to the window. This resulted in the request being table and requiring the applicant to provide more information. The updated site plan, along with staff comments, addresses these items as outlined below.

Landscaping. The updated site plan includes 11 evergreen trees and 16 deciduous trees to meet the buffering requirements of Article 21. The applicant has already installed 3' buffer trees in advance of site plan approval. Following a visual inspection, staff noted that the proposed trees may not achieve full screening of the adjacent residential property. This relates directly to the ordinance requirement for a 6-foot screen to prevent headlight glare onto neighboring

properties. Both sections of the ordinance are provided below.

Section 21.01 Landscaping, Fencing, Walls, and Screening

3) Screening Between Land Uses:

a) Upon any improvement for which a site plan is required, or whenever a nonresidential use or multiple family dwelling abuts a residentially zoned or used property, the Planning Commission may require that screening be constructed at least six (6) feet in height along all adjoining boundaries with residentially zoned or used property. Either a buffer zone or solid wall may be used to provide the screening as provided below, or when the distance between structures or adjoining lots is greater than twice the minimum setbacks would require, a fence meeting the requirements of Subsection 10 may be required at the discretion of the Planning Commission. A buffer zone, at least ten (10) feet in width, may consist of earthen berms and/or living materials so as to maintain a minimum opacity of at least eighty (80) percent. Opacity shall be measured by observation of any two (2) square yard area of landscape screen between one (1) foot above the established grade of the area to be concealed and the top or the highest point of the required screen. The plantings shall meet this standard based upon reasonably anticipated growth over a period of three (3) years. The applicant shall agree in writing to install solid fencing after the expiration of the three (3)-year period, in the event that the landscaping has not totally blocked the view of areas required to be screened. The Planning Commission may waive some or all of these provisions for a planned unit development where the waiving of said provisions will strengthen the planned unit development concept.

Section 10.03 Performance Standards

d) Screening at least six (6) feet in height shall be erected to prevent headlight glare from shining onto adjacent residential property. No screening shall in any way impair safe vertical or horizontal sight distance for any moving vehicles, or be closer than thirty (30) feet to any street right-of-way line.

If the Planning Commission determines the proposed landscaping is sufficient, the applicant shall provide a written agreement stating that a solid fence will be installed should full buffering not be achieved within three (3) years. If the Planning Commission finds the proposed landscaping insufficient, the applicant shall revise the site plan to include additional or larger trees capable of providing complete screening of the affected area, a 6' screened buffer at the southwest corner of the property, and shall provide a written agreement stating that a solid fence will be installed should full buffering not be achieved within three (3) years. These have been added as conditions of approval.

Walkway. The site plan includes an existing walkway that leads into the ROW. At the previous meeting, the Planning Commission raised concerns about public safety and walkability. It should be noted that the existing walkway will be reviewed by MTS for compliance with building code and ADA requirements for the change of use. The Planning Commission should also be aware that if the City undertakes future public infrastructure improvements (such as sidewalks or parking), staff will coordinate with the applicant to ensure that a walkway path leads to the future sidewalk. A sample recommendation has been provided below to Council.

RECOMMENDATION.

At the upcoming meeting, the Planning Commission will review the site plan. Commissioners should carefully consider the information presented in this report, as well as comments from the applicant and the public. If the Planning Commission concurs that the standards of the ordinance have been met, staff recommends approval located at 453 W Center St, subject to the following conditions as shown in the suggested motion.

SUGGESTED MOTION

Suggested Motion. I move to [approve / approve with conditions / deny / table] the request made by Andrea Johnson-Wardynski for site plan approval under Article 24 of the City of the Village of Douglas Zoning Ordinance, based on the findings outlined in the staff report dated September 4, 2025, on the parcel identified as P.P. 59-350-001-00, located at 453 Center St., subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall obtain a building permit from Michigan Township Services for the Change of Use
2. The applicant shall obtain approval from the Saugatuck/Douglas Fire Department
3. Any proposed signage shall require a sign permit per Section 22.04 (A) of the Zoning Ordinance
4. The applicant shall all other federal, state, and local permits if required
5. The applicant shall provide 6' screening on the southwest corner to prevent headlight glare from shining onto adjacent residential property per section 10.03 (d)
6. The applicant shall revise the site plan to include additional or larger trees capable of providing complete screening of the affected area
7. The applicant shall provide written agreement that, if after three (3) years the approved landscaping has not totally blocked the view of areas required to be screened, a solid fence shall be installed to achieve compliance with the screening requirements per Section 21.01 (3) (A)

Recommendation to City Council: City Council should consider future opportunities to improve public infrastructure along W. Center Street, including sidewalks and parking, as funding becomes available.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.