



MEMORANDUM

DDA MEETING: December 27th, 2023

To: City of the Village of Douglas Downtown Development Authority

From: Lisa Nocerini, City Manager

RE: Gateway Signage

On December 6th, 2023, Jenny Pearson, City of the Village of Douglas Project Manager, received a memorandum from Tricia Anderson, AICP, Williams & Works, recommended that based on her findings in the attached document (Attachment A), there is no identified issue placing a new gateway sign in the same location as the existing gateway sign on the corner of Blue Star Highway and Center Street.

Therefore, the DDA has provided the city administration with their approval to look at options for the existing signs replacement. Attached with this memo, are renderings of the current options (Attachment B) for consideration.



williams&works

engineers | surveyors | planners

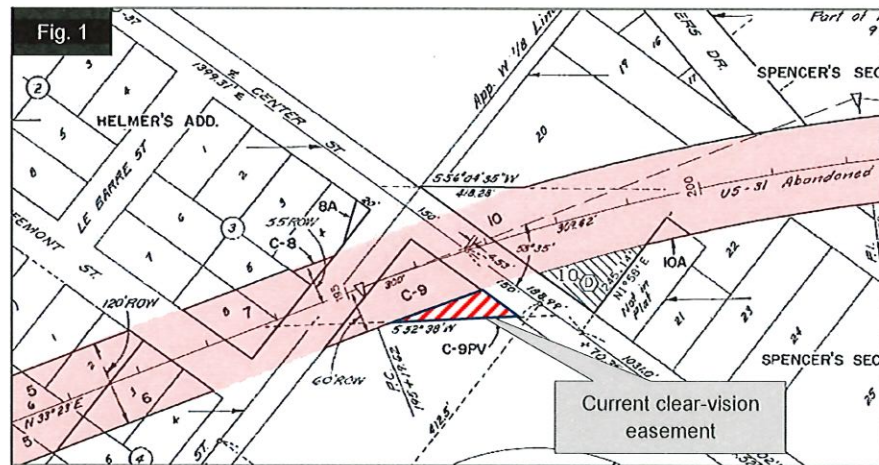
MEMORANDUM

To: City of the Village of Douglas Downtown Development Authority
Date: November 30, 2023
From: Tricia Anderson, AICP
RE: Gateway Sign Placement

It is our understanding that the DDA recently adopted a new City logo and completed a wayfinding signage project within the last year. The project is now in the implementation phase, and the DDA is in the process of selecting precise locations, materials, and dimensions to submit to a sign contractor that will install the signs.

We were asked to provide some guidance to the City on the proposed location of the City's new gateway sign. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide background, context, and our interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance as it pertains to the proposed location and height of the new gateway sign at Blue Star Highway (BSH) and Center Street.

Background. The existing gateway sign is located at the southeast corner of the Center Street/Blue Star Highway intersection. It was first erected several decades ago and has presented various forms and designs over the years. The intersection at BSH and Center Street



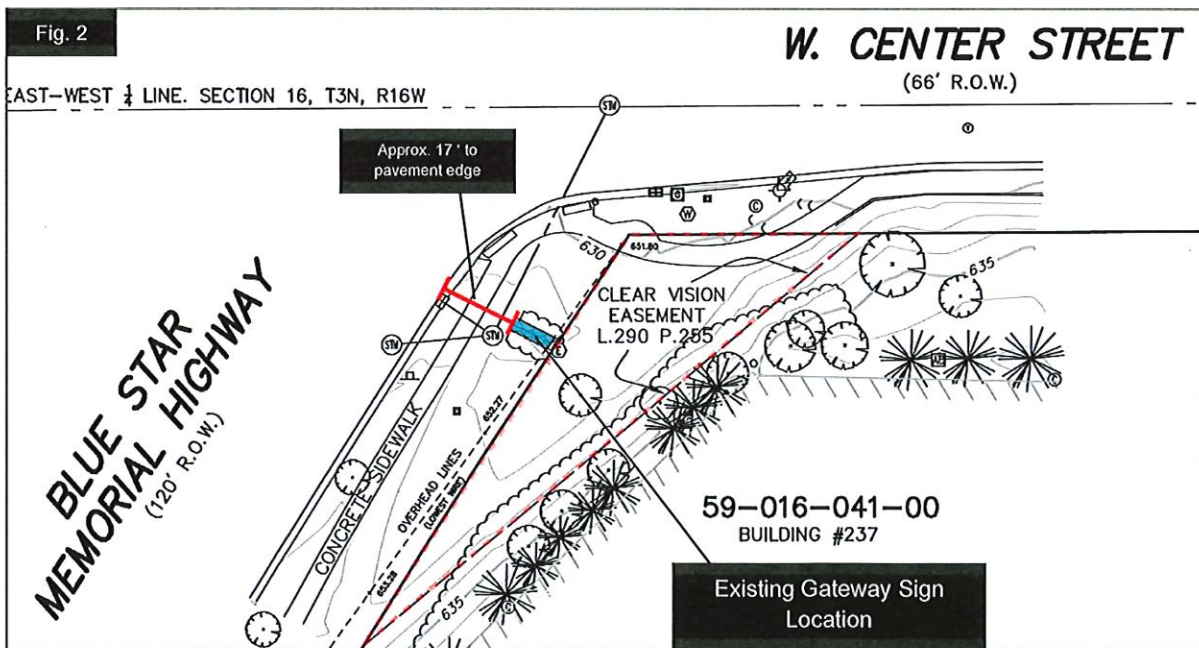
has also taken a few different forms over the years and was previously constructed as a 90-degree four-way stop that provided access to platted parcels in the surrounding subdivisions in the 1930s. Figure 1 below depicts the platted roadways as they were originally constructed, along with the location of BSH when it was proposed in 1964. Figure 1 also illustrates the location of the easement that was created at the intersection of BSH and Center Street. We believe that the clear vision easement was created when this intersection functioned as a four-way stop. The geometry of the reconfigured intersection caused poor sight distance when west-bound Center Street traffic was turning south (left) onto BSH. It would appear that if any

landscaping or other structures were placed in the clear vision easement area, it would even further block a driver from determining whether it was safe to turn left at that intersection. It is unclear when a traffic signal was placed at that intersection, however, we do know that because the signal is there, it is no longer a safety concern to turn left onto south-bound BSH from Center from west-bound Center Street, as there is a designated time for each direction of traffic to pass through the intersection. It should be noted that we do not have clear evidence of the rationale for the signal or the clear vision easement placement, but based on our experience, we've seen these measures put in place to prevent traffic collisions, where historically it has been an issue.

Proposed Location of New Gateway Sign. It is our understanding that the DDA would like to place the new gateway sign in relatively the same location as the existing sign. The existing sign is located in the BSH right-of-way and is 8' in height. It is considered lawfully nonconforming, as new signs are not permitted within any road right-of-way under the current sign ordinance.

We were asked to evaluate the proposed gateway sign size and location against areas of the Zoning Ordinance that would be applicable to the installation of a new sign in the proposed location:

1. Sign ordinance allowance of **government signs**
2. **Size** of the proposed gateway sign
3. **Nonconforming** status of the existing sign
4. Location of the new sign as it pertains to the **clear vision** easement and Section 16.31 of the General Provisions Article of the Zoning Ordinance



Evaluation. The City recently adopted a new sign ordinance which makes the administration of sign regulations a bit more user-friendly. Section 22.03.22 defines a *government sign* as “A sign that is erected or required to be erected by the City of the Village of Douglas, Allegan County, or the state or federal government”. The proposed gateway sign, by definition, is considered a government sign. Section 22.04.B names *government signs* as exempt from the requirement to obtain a permit prior to their installation.

There are prohibitions listed in the Sign Ordinance as well, pertaining to signs that obstruct clear vision and placing signs in the right-of-way. These two items are taken into consideration as we evaluate the location of the sign.

The sign is proposed in the right-of-way, however, the existing sign is lawfully located there and retains nonconforming rights to continue to exist in that location (regardless of whether it is a government sign or not). There are several signs located within the BSH right-of-way, and are allowed to remain with the issuance of a revokable license agreement. We believe that the existing sign has remained in the same location for many years because it does not obstruct the clear vision of the corner. It is worth noting that the existing sign is not located in the clear vision easement, rather it is located just outside the boundaries of the easement and approximately 17' from the pavement edge of BSH. The required *clear vision corners* are regulated in Section 16.31 as follows:

Section 16.31, Clear Vision Corner

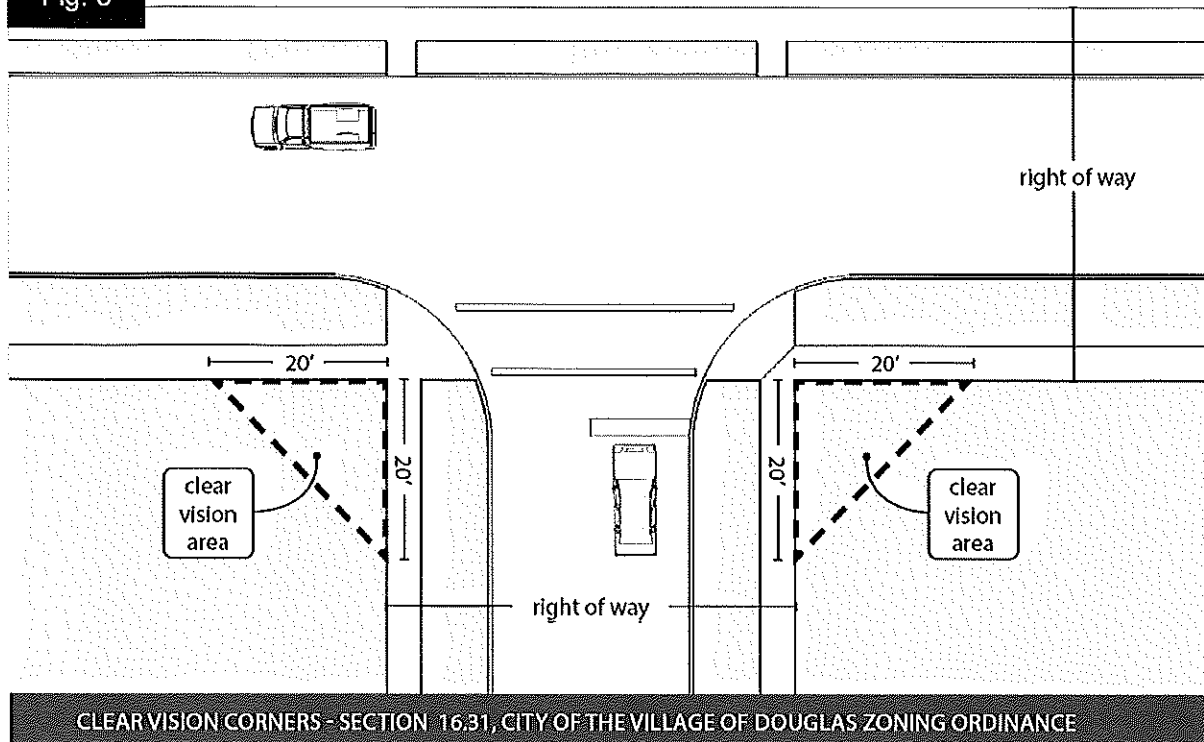
The following regulations shall apply to all landscaping, fences, walls, screens, or similar devices at the intersection of driveways with public streets or approved private roads or where streets or private roads intersect:

- 1) *A fence, wall, sign, screen, or planting shall not exceed three (3) feet in height if located within the twenty (20) foot clear vision zone shown in Figures 18.1 through 18.4. [see Figure 3 below].*
- 2) *A fence, wall, sign, screen or planting shall not be erected or maintained in such a way as to obstruct vision or interfere with traffic visibility as determined by the Zoning Administrator or Planning Commission, as applicable.*
- 3) *No structure, hazard or obstruction shall be placed or maintained in the right-of-way of any public street, except as may be approved by the road authority with jurisdiction over the street.*

Our approximate measurement of the corner at the right of way line would place the existing sign outside of the *clear vision corner* that is required to be maintained.

Additionally, the placement in the right-of-way is permitted per 16.31(3), as it has been permitted by the City. Presumably, the City would not approve of a structure in the right-of-way that would cause an obstruction or a safety hazard. The proposed gateway sign is proposed at 5' in height, which reduces the nonconformity, but also reduces the potential for the sign to cause obstructions.

Fig. 3



Recommendation. Based on the findings outlined in this memorandum, we do not see an issue with placing the new gateway sign in the same location as the existing gateway sign, as summarized below:

1. It is not within the clear vision easement, which we believe was ultimately placed there for safety purposes when the intersection was reconfigured to account for the path of the Blue Star Highway, and before the signal was in place.
2. The existing sign retains nonconforming rights to be located within the right-of-way and was presumably permitted to remain because has not caused an obstruction and because the City approved of it being there.
3. The current location of the gateway sign appears to be outside of the 20' clear vision corner area.
4. A wayfinding sign owned by the City is deemed a government sign, which is exempt from the permitting requirement.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions.

B

Letters are approximately 12" high



1' Depth
Double Sided



Letters are approximately 18" high



1' Depth
Double Sided

Letters are approximately 18" high

