

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: February 24, 2026

To: Appearance Commission

From: Noah Schumerth, Assistant Director of Economic and Community Development

Through: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Case 26-05: Sign Variance, Dynamite Shrimp @ 18719 Dixie Highway

DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

Title	Pages	Prepared by	Date
Application	1	Mahmoud Essa, Applicant	02/25/2026
Original Sign Submittal	2	Creative LED Signs and Printing	01/23/2026

BACKGROUND

The applicant, Mahmoud Essa of Creative LED Signs, has requested a sign variance from commercial wall sign requirements for a business at 18719 Dixie Highway. The business, Dynamite Shrimp, is proposing a wall sign which exceeds the maximum allowed size (19.5 square feet) for the tenant space in which the building is proposed.

DISCUSSION

The proposed business, Dynamite Shrimp, is a restaurant which will operate in the Southgate Shopping Plaza, a large multi-tenant commercial center located in Homewood's Southgate business district. This center has eight total businesses, including a large preschool and childcare facility. The proposed business will be located in a small tenant space (13 feet of frontage) near the northern end of the plaza.

Proposed Sign Design

The proposed sign is an internally-illuminated aluminum cabinet sign with colored translucent sign faces. The proposed sign will include LED illumination. The proposed sign has a total area of 63 square feet. The proposed sign has a maximum width of 110 inches in width and a maximum height of 82 inches. The proposed sign is designed to display the logo of the business. The proposed sign will have a maximum height from grade of approximately 17 feet, and project approximately 11 inches from the wall surface of the building.

Current Sign Code Requirements

Under the newly adopted commercial sign requirements in the Village Sign Code (Section 44-10-06), the maximum allowable area for a wall sign for this tenant space is 19.5 square feet (1.5 square foot per 1 foot of linear frontage, 13 feet x 1.5 = 19.5 square feet). The tenant is permitted to install one wall sign.

The maximum height of the sign is 20.25 feet, which is the maximum height of the Southgate Business Center.

VARIANCE STANDARDS

The Appearance Commission is given authority to review requests for sign variances against the Sign Variance Standards found in Section 44-07-14.(c) of the Village Zoning Ordinance.

- a. Can the property in question yield a reasonable return if permitted only under the signage regulations governing the district within which the property is located? The subject tenant space is in a location with restricted visibility for those traveling southbound on Dixie Highway. The tenant space is set back approximately 50' from the roadway. Dixie Highway has very limited pedestrian amenities, and the sign would largely be viewed by motorists. The restricted visibility and overall location of the proposed business may place greater importance on the sign for visibility.
- b. Is the plight of the owner due to unique circumstances that are not self-imposed, including property location, orientation, frontage placement, or demonstrable feature of the property, which is communicated by the applicant? The proposed tenant space is extremely narrow (13'). Only one other tenant space in the Southgate Shopping Plaza has a similar width and also has a larger sign than would be allowed under current code standards. The subject tenant space is also located in an area with restricted visibility for passing motorists. These characteristics of the subject tenant space and the business are not self-imposed by the owner.
- c. If granted, will the sign variance adversely affect the health, safety, or public welfare near the sign? There are no anticipated impacts to health, safety, or public welfare from the proposed sign structure. The sign is a wall sign which is proposed to be constructed in alignment with Village building codes.
- d. If granted, will the sign variance negatively affect or harm the architectural character of the area in which the sign is proposed? The previous business in the tenant space (Pooch Parlor) had a larger sign than is currently allowed by code (25 square feet vs. 19.5 square feet currently permitted). This sign currently remains installed on the building. The proposed wall sign is 63 square feet in area, which is significantly larger than other signs on larger tenant spaces in the immediate vicinity (Cold Stone Creamery in the same building has a 50 square-foot sign on a 22-foot wide tenant space).

The majority of wall signs on the current building were constructed under older sign requirements, which permitted up to 2.5 square feet of signage per foot of overall building frontage. This ratio was applied to the entire building under older codes, rather than individual tenant spaces. If the former ratio for allowable sign area was applied to this building, it would allow 32.5 square feet of signage on this tenant space, which is far below the proposed sign area (63 square feet). The proposed sign is unlikely to conform to the existing architectural character of signs in the area.

The sign is also significant taller than other signs already constructed on the commercial building. All other signs are horizontal in orientation, with heights between 1-2 feet. Other

signs on the building consist of 1-2 rows of lettering in a horizontal patterns along existing sign raceways on the building. The proposed sign is 7' 10" in height, which is 5' 10" taller than the next tallest sign on the building (Cold Stone Creamery, 2 feet in height).

Staff recommends a reduction in proposed sign area to meet this standard and to ensure conformance with other signs constructed at the Southgate Business Center.

e. Is the sign variance in alignment with the comprehensive plan, appearance plan, and other adopted plans of the village? The proposed signage is not expected to impact the goals and policies of the Village comprehensive plan. Staff has provided a review of the proposed signage against the standards for signage found in the Village Appearance Plan:

- 1. Wall, ground, and identification signs shall be part of the architectural concept. Size color, lettering, locations, and arrangement shall be harmonious with the building design, and shall be compatible with signs on adjoining buildings. **Not met.*** The proposed sign is substantially larger than other signs on the same multi-tenant commercial building and on adjacent buildings in the Southgate business district. These adjacent signs include signs for businesses in tenant spaces 2-3x larger than the proposed business.
- 2. Materials used in signs shall be of sound architectural character, be durable, and be harmonious with building design and surrounding landscape. Materials that tend to become illegible shall be avoided. **Met.*** The sign is an aluminum cabinet sign with a colored and translucent acrylic face, which is similar to other signs on the same multi-tenant commercial building and in the surrounding Southgate business district.
- 3. Every sign shall be scaled and designed so as to conform with relationship to buildings and surrounds. **Not met.*** The sign is significantly larger than surrounding signs on the same building. The sign is much taller (7' 10") than other signs nearby (1' – 2' in total height). The sign is not in scale with surrounding signs, particularly when vertical scale is considered.
- 4. Colors shall be used harmoniously and with restraint. Lighting shall be harmonious with the design. If external spot or floor lighting is used, it shall be arranged so that light source is shielded from view. **Met.*** Lighting will be internal to the aluminum cabinet.
- 5. The provisions of the Homewood Municipal Code as it regulates signs, shall be part of the criteria of this subsection. **Met.*** The sign has been reviewed by the Building Division and is considered in alignment with Village building codes and other municipal ordinances.

STAFF COMMENTS

The newly adopted Village Sign Code, which was adopted in 2025, adjusted sign procedures. These procedures added standards of review for sign variances, and added a new procedure (comprehensive sign plan review) to allow for consideration of sign code modifications without review through the sign variance process. The sign variance process is now reserved for variations from the sign code where a

clear pre-existing hardship is identified and application of sign requirements would result in practical difficulties for a business or resident.

Sign variances may be approved, approved with conditions, or denied by the Appearance Commission. The Appearance Commission may also refer a case to the Village Board for review.

RECOMMENDED APPEARANCE COMMISSION ACTION

The Appearance Commission may wish to consider the following motion:

Approve Case 26-06, Sign Variance for Dynamite Shrimp at 18719 Dixie Highway, as proposed in the application materials and drawings submitted by Mahmoud Essa and Creative LED Signs and Printing, subject to the following conditions:

1. The applicant shall revise sign drawings to reduce the total wall sign area to 40 square feet.