

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: October 3, 2024

To: Appearance Commission

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

Through: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Case 24-34: Wind Creek Signage Proposal

DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

Title	Pages	Prepared by	Date
Application Form	1	Meredith Acosta, Applicant	08/20/2024
Signage Site Plan	3	LH Sign Development	03/12/2024
Parking Garage Signage	14	LH Sign Development	06/20/2024
Site Freestanding Signage	16	LH Sign Development	06/27/2024
Staff Exhibits	2	Noah Schumerth, Asst. Dir. ECD	08/26/2024

BACKGROUND

LH Companies, the applicant, providing signage design services for Wind Creek Hotel and Casino, is proposing the installation of parking garage signage and signage to support site identification and circulation. This proposal is part of a larger sign submittal between both jurisdictions (Homewood, East Hazel Crest) within which the casino and hotel are located. The portion in Homewood is the parking garage.

The signage submittal includes exterior directional signs that require sign permit review but are not permitted sign types, per Section 30 30-04.b.10 of the Homewood Code of Ordinances, which prohibits any sign not explicitly permitted. The applicant has requested a sign variance to allow the exterior directional signs exceeding three square feet in area.

Exterior parking garage signage and freestanding monument signage are subject to sign permit and design review by the Appearance Commission.

DISCUSSION

Site Context

Wind Creek Hotel and Casino is a hotel and gaming establishment currently under construction at 17400 Halsted Street, near the northwest corner of 175th Street and Halsted Street. The hotel and casino sit within both the jurisdiction of Homewood and East Hazel Crest. The hotel/casino are within East Hazel Crest, and the 66,000 square-foot, 725-space parking garage is located within Homewood.

Signage Review

Introduction

The applicant has proposed the following exterior signage subject to sign review by the Village of Homewood:

- One (1) freestanding welcome ground sign along Halsted Street (Type 1D)
- One (1) freestanding ground sign along 175th Street (Type 1C)
- Two (2) freestanding ground signs with directional and branding information (Type 5B and ST9)
- Three (3) exterior directional signage attached to the parking garage structure

The applicant has proposed additional signage throughout the parking garage and surrounding site area within Homewood. However, all other signs proposed are exempt from review by Section 30-04 of the Village Code of Ordinances due to location within the interior of the parking garage or classification as an exempt directional sign.

Standards

When reviewing signage, the Appearance Commission should consider the following provisions of Section F (Signage) of the Village Appearance Plan:

- 1. Wall, ground, and identification signs shall be a part of the architectural concept. Size, color, letter, locations and arrangement shall be harmonious with the building design, and shall be compatible with signs on adjoining buildings.*
- 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 should be avoided.*
- 3. Every sign shall be scaled and designed to conform with relationship to buildings and surrounds.*
- 4. Colors shall be used harmoniously and with restraint. Lighting shall be harmonious with design.*

In addition, the Appearance Plan states that for any sign review, “the Homewood Municipal Code, as it regulates to signs, shall be part of the criteria of this subsection.” Staff has analyzed the proposed signage and finds that the total signage is within maximum area allowance (800 square feet for the Homewood portion of the Wind Creek site). The sign types are permitted in accordance with the Sign Code, with the exception of three (3) exterior directional signs that require a variance. All other standards in Section 30 of the Code of Ordinances are met by the applicant. Staff finds that the freestanding ground signs are compliant with Section 30 requirements. The exterior directional signage will require a sign variance by the Appearance Commission.

A new freestanding “welcome to Homewood” monument sign is proposed to replace an existing Village monument sign on Halsted within the right-of-way (near the SWC of 174th and Halsted). The existing sign matches the other gateway signage in the Village, located at: Ridge Road west of Halsted; 183rd Street west of Kedzie, Dixie Highway, south of 187th Street; and Dixie Highway south of 175th Street.

The proposed gateway sign is designed to match the casino brand of the freestanding signs. The signage includes large gold-colored aluminum tube frames and a grey-and-white sign face constructed from aluminum panels. The signage is not consistent with Village branding (beyond the use of the Village logo). However, the sign matches an additional freestanding sign with the East Hazel Crest logo which will be placed within East Hazel Crest jurisdiction.

Staff previously recommended the replacement of this gateway sign with a sign with more harmonious design with other gateway signage in Homewood. However, the Village has proposed new recommendations to retain the existing signage to match other signs on the Wind Creek signage. The Village is seeking alternative locations for enhanced gateway signage along Halsted Street, which may be subject to future review by the Appearance Commission.

Sign Variance

Introduction

The applicant has requested a series of exterior directional signs. Directional signs are defined in the Village's Sign Code as:

"[signs] conveying directions or instructions for the safety or convenience of the public (vehicular or pedestrian) or necessary for the operation of the premises..."

The applicant has proposed three exterior directional signs at the top of vehicular entrances at three locations in the parking garage. These signs are designed to guide motorists to entrance and exit lanes at each access point into the garage and provide required information at each access point.

Each directional sign proposed is 16 inches in height and varies from 37' to 39' 4" in length. The signs are between 49.3 to 54.4 square feet in area. The signs are rectangular aluminum tubing (1.5" x 2") with a gold color, surrounding a colored aluminum sign face with white or dark grey color. Lettering on the sign will be acrylic with white or dark grey lettering as necessary to provide contrast from the colored aluminum sign face. The signs will extend across the full span of each vehicular access point.

Directional signs under three square feet in area are exempt from sign permit review. Signs greater than three square feet must meet the requirements of Section 30 (Signs) of the Village Code of Ordinances. However, the sign code does not provide standards for directional signs greater than three square feet in area, nor are directional signs identified as a permitted sign in Section 30-4.(a) of the Village Sign Code.

The proposed signs exceed three square feet in area; therefore a variance is required.

Variance Analysis

A variance cannot be granted unless it meets the standards established in Section 30-21 of the Village Code of Ordinances:

1. *A particular hardship does exist (requiring the variation from the ordinance).*

A hardship is created by the unique scale and type of parking structure. The parking structure is Homewood's largest parking structure built to-date. The 725-space parking structure has unique

circulation needs to support the site's hotel and gaming uses, including large driveways and dedicated valet parking entrances. The scale requires larger directional signage than is generally required for other buildings, and Village sign regulations do not address this scale of directional signage.

Other types of permitted sign types in Section 30-4. of the Village Code of Ordinances, including wall signs, ground signs, and blade signs, are unlikely to permit a necessary level of navigation aid at garage entrances because signage guiding navigation through each lane ("entrance," "exit," "valet," etc.) will not be aligned as closely with the lane of travel. Such alternative signage types will also have limitations such as lower visibility for motorists.

Section 30-1 exempts directional signs below 3 square feet in area. Chapter 30 of the Code of Ordinances does not provide standards for directional signs larger than this size.

Staff finds that sufficient hardship exists to permit a variation from sign regulations in Section 30 of the Village Code of Ordinances.

2. The proposed signage is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of this chapter.

The signage complies with all other applicable signage regulations in Chapter 30 of the Code of Ordinances, including maximum sign area. The signage does not negatively impact public health, safety, or general welfare. The signage does not disrupt the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and is constructed in a manner that is safe for the public. The signage is not unlawful or unsafe in its construction or location.

Staff finds the proposed directional signage meets the intent and stated purposes of Section 30 (Signs) of the Code of Ordinances.

RECOMMENDED APPEARANCE COMMISSION ACTION

The Appearance Commission may wish to consider the following motion:

Approve Case 24-34:

- (1) Wind Creek Signage Proposal, and
- (2) Variation from Section 30-04.b.10 of the Village Code of Ordinances to permit three (3) exterior directional signs that exceed the maximum area of three square feet.