



MCKENNA

July 2, 2026

Board of Zoning Appeals
Village of Lake Orion
21 E. Church Street
Lake Orion, Michigan 48362-3274

Subject: **Variance from Zoning Ordinance Requirement Review** (Plans received May 29, 2026)
Location: **214 South Broadway Street, Suite 300 – Parcel ID# 09-11-231-005**
Zoning: **PUD – Planned Unit Development District / Height Overlay District**

Dear Board Members:

We have reviewed the above-referenced variance application submitted by Kari Torkko, on behalf of Linwood Orion LLC (the “Applicant”) who is a business owner at the cited residence. Ms. Torkko is proposing a dimensional variance from Chapter 155 Sign Regulations, that would allow the applicant to erect a business sign with a 23 square foot total. **It should also be noted that since submitting the variance request, the applicant installed the sign without approval and permits.**

LOCATION AND PROPOSED PROJECT

The subject lot is approximately 3,950 square feet in area and is occupied by a multi-tenant building. The lot is located on (M-24) between the lake and the S. Broadway Street intersection. The subject property is zoned PUD - Planned Unit Development District and is also located within the Height Overlay District. An aerial photo of the subject site and the surrounding area is provided for context.

The Applicant proposes to install a 23 square foot wall sign.



SIGN ORDINANCE STANDARD AND REQUESTED VARIANCE

Article XV – Land Usage

Chapter 155 – Sign Regulations

Section 155.06 – District Regulations

SUBSECTION D – CC and MU Districts: non-residential uses

Section 155.06.D allows for one (1) permanent wall sign on each facade which has a separate public entrance, plus one (1) additional wall sign not to exceed 12 sq. ft. in area.

HEADQUARTERS

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(D) CC and MU Districts: non-residential uses.

Sign Type (a)	Number	Locations	Maximum Area (b) (c)	Maximum Height	Specific Regulations (d) (e)
Permanent wall sign: single tenant building	1 on each facade which has a separate public entrance	Shall not project more than 12 inches from the face of the building or any permanent architectural feature	-	Shall not project above the roof or parapet	-
Permanent wall sign: multi-tenant building (units with individual public entrance)	1 wall sign per building unit, plus one additional wall sign		10% of front wall facade area per business, up to a max. 60 sq. ft. per business		
Permanent wall sign: multi-tenant building (units with shared public entrance)	1 on each facade which has a separate public entrance, plus 1 additional wall sign not to exceed 12 sq. ft. in area		-		

The Applicant is requesting a dimensional variance to erect a 23 sq. ft. wall sign.

VARIANCE STANDARDS FOR APPROVAL

Per the *Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, P.A. 110 of 2006, as amended*, the Board must, prior to acting on a requested variance, consider and make findings regarding several factors. Specifically, in Section 19.04.D.1 of the Village's Zoning Ordinance, the Board may grant a variance upon a finding that a practical difficulty exists. A finding of practical difficulty exists when the applicant has demonstrated that all of the zoning ordinance criteria exist.

Each of the required standards is described below followed by an analysis of whether those conditions exist in this particular case.

A. Strict compliance with restrictions governing area, setback, frontage, height, bulk, density or other non-use matters will unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose or will render ordinance conformity unnecessarily burdensome.

Applicant Response:

"The proposed location and size of the sign will allow for optimal exposure to travelers coming north on M-24. The regulated 12 sq ft on that side of the building would be very small and difficult to make out for travelers".

Planner Response:

Strict compliance with the Ordinance provisions will not unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property. The proposed variance for increased signage would promote visibility to the business, though compliance with the standards would not create an unnecessary burden.

B. The variance will provide substantial justice to the applicant as well as neighboring property owners.

Applicant Response:

"This will allow people traveling and clients coming to our location to easily find our building. We struggle a lot with that currently. There is only one other sign placed on the front of this building so it makes it very hard to give directions as to which building we are located in".

Planner Response:

The variance would provide justice to the applicant by allowing greatly improved visibility to patrons and new customers of their business and would allow drivers along S Broadway to see the sign.



- C. The variance requested is the minimum variance needed to provide substantial relief to the applicant and/or be consistent with justice to other property owners.**

Applicant Response:

"We have a sign already built from one of our other locations (that we recently closed down) that is 23 sq ft and we'd like to be able to use that again. Also, knowing the size of the sign and how it looked on the other building we realize that we need at least the same size here in order for the sign to be effective in allowing people to recognize and find our offices in Lake Orion".

Planner Response:

The variance requested is not the minimum variance needed to provide substantial relief to the applicant, as the requested sign size is 23 sq. ft. and the maximum allowance is 12 sq. ft. We do not anticipate the granting of the variance causing harm or a nuisance to the adjacent property owners. However, there is concern of the justice to the other tenants in the building. This is a multi-tenant commercial building with multiple offices and businesses located inside the building. The existing site signage is a shared ground sign with all tenants listed. If the variance is granted, this applicant would be the only one of several tenants to have a business sign displayed on the face of the building. Therefore, if this variance is granted, it may set a precedent that might lead other tenants to request the same.

- D. The need for variance(s) is due to unique circumstances peculiar to the property and not generally applicable in the area or to other properties in the same zoning district.**

Applicant Response:

"We believe the typical requirements are meant for a much smaller building that possibly is a stand alone business. This building is large and has 3 stories. A larger sign is needed to ensure ease of directions for our clients".

Planner Response:

The variance requested is due to some unique circumstances to the property, since there is no public entrance on the south side of the building, no sign would be allowed to place there, which is a missed opportunity for advertising the businesses within the building. The regulations are specific for multi-tenant commercial (non-residential) uses. While the building is large and the provided signage may be small in nature, the Board should consider the precedent granting the variance would set.

- E. The problem and resulting need for the variance has been created by strict compliance with the Zoning Ordinance, and not by the applicant or applicant's predecessors; it is not self-created.**

Applicant Response:

"We are simply asking for a sign larger than the current zoning requirements".

Planner Response:

The need for a variance is not self-created by the applicant. However, strict compliance with the Ordinance is possible without the granting of a variance.

- F. Granting the variance will not impair the public health, safety, comfort, or welfare of the inhabitants of Lake Orion.**



Applicant Response:

"The 23 sq ft is still not an overly large or sign that will deter from the beauty of driving into Lake Orion from the south headed north on M-24".

Planner Response:

Granting the applicant would not impair public health, safety, comfort or welfare of the inhabitants of the Village of Lake Orion.



RECOMMENDATION

The Board of Zoning Appeals shall only grant a variance from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance upon finding the criteria described above have been met for the variance requested.

In making your determinations relative to the requested variance, the BZA shall specify the grounds for the decision. Subject to any additional information presented and discussed by the applicant, Board, and/or the public during the public hearing and incorporated into the record prior to any findings being made, we find the proposed request satisfies the requirements of the ordinance criteria and recommend the BZA **deny the variance** as requested based on the following findings of fact:

1. The current regulations do not unreasonably prevent the owner from using the property for a permitted purpose.
2. The requested variance is not the minimum necessary to provide relief.
3. The applicant has not demonstrated that the hardship has not been self-created.
4. The granting of a variance may set a precedent.

We look forward to reviewing these findings and recommendations with you. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

McKENNA

Jacob VanBoxel, MSA
Principal Planner

Sommer Nafal, NCI
Assistant Planner

cc: Village Clerk: Sonja Stout, 21 E. Church Street, Lake Orion, MI 48362
Applicant: Kari Torkko, 214 S Broadway Ste 300