

August 13, 2025

City of Lathrup Village
Zoning Board of Appeals
27400 Southfield Road
Lathrup Village, MI 48076

Commercial Sign Application -ZBA Review

Site: 26600 Southfield Road
Applicant: Sheker Construction
Plan Date: July 18, 2025
Zoning: MX Mixed Use
Parcel ID: 24-24-104-033

Dear Zoning Board of Appeals,

We have completed a review of the Sign Ordinance for a proposed wall sign at the new location of Holbrook Auto Parts business, currently undergoing building renovation along the east side of Southfield Road, between Ramsgate Drive and Meadowbrook Court. A summary of our findings is provided below. Comments are provided in **bold**.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS REQUIRING ZBA APPROVAL:

The applicant requests a dimensional variance to allow an 86 square foot wall sign in lieu of the ordinance-required 64 square foot maximum wall sign.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The approximate half acre site is zoned MX – Mixed Use District and is located along the east side of Southfield Road, between Meadowood Court to the south and Ramsgate Drive to the north. On January 21, 2025, the existing, 1-story, 7,595 square foot building received site plan approval by the Planning Commission for a full renovation of the interior and exterior of the building, as well as the use as an auto parts retail business. The site does not have direct access to and from Southfield Road, rather, vehicular driveways from Meadowood Court and Ramsgate Drive provide access to an existing surface parking lot in front of the building. The rear of the site, facing east, appears to abut an unimproved public alleyway, consisting of overhead utilities which separate the site from single-family lots. The properties to the south and west of the site are zoned MX – Mixed Use. Areas north of California Drive SE are zoned CV – Commercial Vehicular.

The proposed retail use of the site will maintain a principally permitted use; however, what was once previously multiple tenant spaces will now consist of a single tenant occupying the entire site. As such, the applicant is requesting a single wall sign at the center of the building facing Southfield Road. Since the building will not have multiple tenant signs, a sign that exceeds the ordinance limits is proposed, as further outlined and explained below.



AERIAL MAP



AERIAL ZONING MAP

Dimensional Standards				
Development Standard	Zoning Ord. Sect.	Required	Provided	Comments
WALL SIGN (FRONT OF BUILDING)				
Location / Setbacks	52-24.D.	On principal building façade at the sign band	At the center of the principal building façade. Above main entrance	Compliant (building does not consist of a sign band)
Maximum Sign Area				
	52-24.D.	10% of ground floor street-facing bldg. face up to a max. of 64 sf.	84 square feet	Not Compliant₁
Maximum Height				
	52-24.D.	Not to exceed the height of the building	Approximate 4'-6" below the top of the building	Compliant
Number				
	52-24.D.	1 per street level business w/ bldg. frontage. Corner bldgs.: 1 on each side	1 sign West frontage (front) only	Compliant

Lighting				
	52-23.K.1-5.	Interior or exterior lighting permitted, w/ glare control. Backlit allowed.	Interior lighting	Compliant ₂

1. *Sign area is the surface display area of a sign. The area of a sign shall be calculated by means of the smallest square or rectangle that will encompass the extreme limits of the writing, representation, emblem, logo or other display, together with any material or color forming an integral part of the background of the display or used to differentiate the sign from the backdrop or structure against which it is placed, except that lower case letters with ascenders and descenders that extend beyond the limits of the sign height by a maximum of 12 inches, will not be calculated into the total sign area. **The proposed sign area amounts to 84 square feet (7' tall x 12' wide), 20 square feet beyond the 64 square feet allowed by the ordinance. We note that if the height and width dimensions were reduced by just beyond 1 foot each, the sign area would comply with the ordinance standard (6' x 11' = 66 square feet). This dimension would appear to be of reasonable scale when compared to this portion of the building.***



2. 52-23(k) Illumination.
 - (1) Illuminating devices for signs shall comply with the City of Lathrup Village Electrical Code.
 - (2) The light for any illuminated sign shall be so shaded, shielded or directed that the light intensity or brightness meet the requirements of [section 5.8](#) of the zoning ordinance.
 - (3) The source of illumination may be internal or external but shall not be both internal and external. The source of the light shall not be exposed. **Lighting will be internal.**
 - (4) Glare control for sign lighting shall be achieved through the use of full cutoff fixtures, shields, and baffles, and appropriate application of fixture mounting height, lumens, aiming angle, and fixture placement.
 - (5) Backlit signs shall use only white light for illumination. Such signs shall spread their illumination a maximum of four inches beyond the sign elements.

52-23(l) Signs shall not have scrolling, blinking, flashing, animated, or fluttering lights or other illuminating devices which have a changing light intensity, brightness, or color.

3. **Additional Review Comment 1:** The application form states the smaller sign requirement creates a hardship related to visibility and effective identification. The applicant indicates the larger sign and letters will improve visibility as passing Southfield Road traffic travels by at posted speed limits of 45 mph. The applicant states that the proposed larger sign dimensions will allow for improved safety and commercial viability.

According to the previously approved site plan dimensions, the proposed wall sign will be approximately 67' from the front property line and approximately 120' from the Southfield Road paved travel lanes. The applicant has not provided the letter height, but it appears that even the smallest lettering ("auto parts") would be legible.

4. **Additional Review Comment 2:** The applicant should be aware of other sign ordinance standards, particularly related to window signs. Window signs may not require permits; however, they are limited to ten percent (10%) of the total glass area on that side of the building and on the floor where the sign will be located.
5. **Additional Review Comment 3:** The subject site consists of an existing monument sign. The sign application under review does not mention or include the existing monument sign; however, the applicant has indicated there may be interest in relocating it to a central location along the Southfield Road property line. ***The applicant shall provide additional detail as to the reuse of the existing monument sign and/or relocating the monument sign to a different location along Southfield Road. We note, the existing monument sign appears to be an existing nonconforming structure as it may be closer to the west property line than the ordinance-required 10'-0" setback.***



Standards for Considering Variance Requests. Section 7.7.14. provides the criteria for the applicant to present and the ZBA to consider when considering variance requests:

- A. Because of the particular physical surroundings, shape, or topographical conditions of the specific property involved, a particular hardship will result to the applicant if the strict letter of the regulations are carried out. Mere inconveniences or increased development costs shall not be deemed hardships under the terms of this provision.
- B. The factual circumstances upon which an application for a deviation is based are unique to the property for which the deviation is sought, and are not applicable to the city generally, or to other property within the same zoning classification.
- C. Any alleged practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship caused by this ordinance has not been created by any persons presently or previously having an interest in the property.

- D. The proposed deviation will not adversely affect the purpose or objectives of this ordinance, nor impair the adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property, nor increase the hazard from fire, flood, and other dangers of said property, nor diminish the marketable value of adjacent lands and buildings, nor increase the congestion in public streets.
- E. The proposed deviation will not otherwise impair the public health, safety, comfort, and general welfare.
- F. The benefit to the applicant will be real and substantial and any detriment to the neighboring property owners and occupants or the community at large is not substantial or is illusory. Benefits and detriments shall be determined in relation to the factors which impair the value and use of properties as related in D & E, above.
- G. The applicant is both willing and able to provide additional amenities beyond those minimally required by this ordinance and/or restrict the use of the property beyond those limitations placed on the property by this ordinance so that the fair market value of neighboring properties will be enhanced beyond the values which would accrue to them if the property were developed and used in strict conformity with the ordinance.
- H. The same or a substantially similar request shall not have been presented to the council in the form of a petition for a zoning amendment and been expressly denied and rejected after a public hearing. **No similar variances had been requested at this site.**
- I. Any special criteria listed for specific deviations in Sections 3.2.2, 4.1.4, and 5.13.15.
This does not appear to apply for this situation.

Staff will be available to discuss this review at the next ZBA meeting.

Respectfully,
Giffels Webster



Jill Bahm, AICP
Partner



Eric Pietsch
Senior Planner

