



BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS STAFF REPORT

To: Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals

From: Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director

Meeting Date: September 9, 2025

Agenda Item: BZA 25-007

Application Type: Developmental Standards Variance

Hearing: Preliminary Hearing

Summary: Applicant is seeking a Developmental Standards Variance from TABLE 26-6. 701. B. WALL SIGN SPECIFIC STANDARDS, DIMENSIONS, SIGN SIZE, and ADDITIONAL STANDARDS to install a new MUNSTER HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER sign to exceed the permitted height and over an architectural detail.

Applicant: Emma O'Brien, Legacy Sign Group

Property Address: 8808 Columbia Avenue

Current Zoning: CZ – Civic Zone (MHS)

Adjacent Zoning: North: CZ – Civic Zone (STOM Administrative Building)
South: CZ – Civic Zone (NIPSCO ROW) and PUD (Community Hospital)
East: CZ – Civic Zone (STOM Athletic Fields)
West: CZ – Civic Zone (Community Park)

Action Requested: Schedule Public Hearing

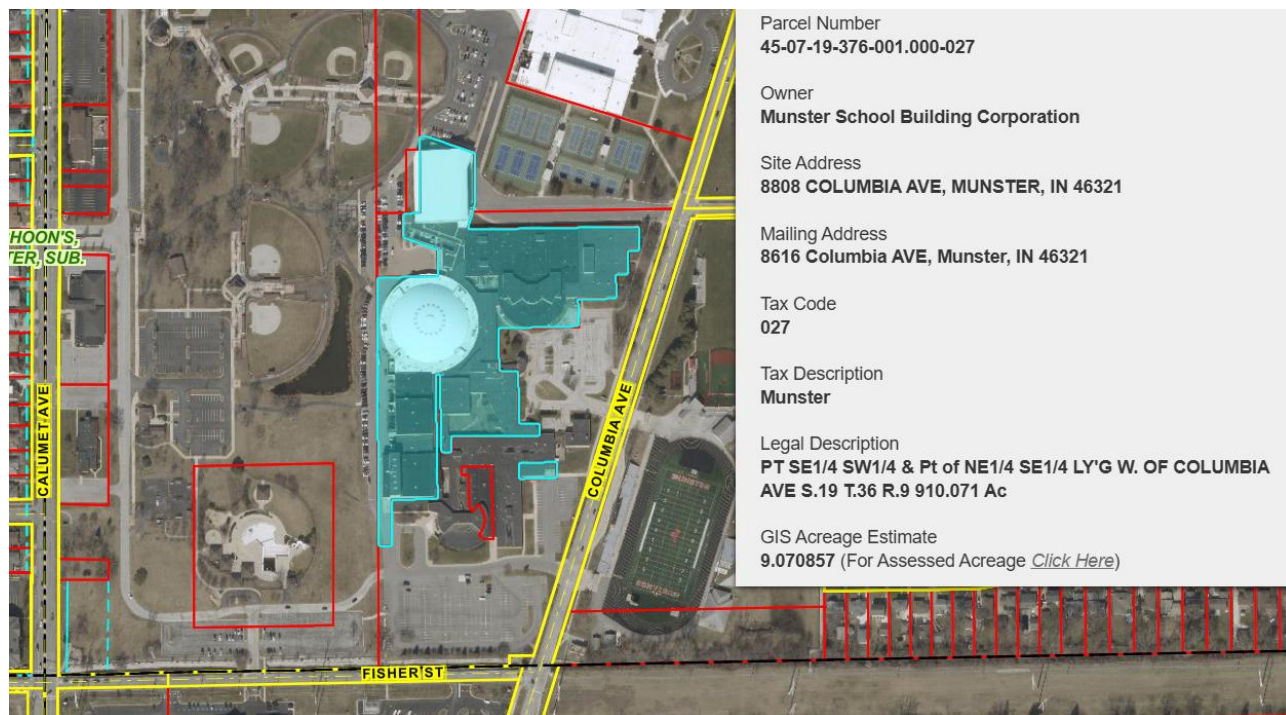
Additional Actions Required: Findings of Fact

Staff Recommendation: Motion to Schedule Public Hearing
Review Conditions of Approval Questions
Review of Zoning Code(s)

Attachments: 1. Exhibit A: Application
2. Exhibit B: Conditions of Approval
3. Exhibit C: Proposed Signage
4. Exhibit D: Alta Survey

PROJECT LOCATION

The subject property is generally located between Columbia Avenue and Calumet Avenue, north of Fisher Street. The proposed entrance sign is located at Munster Highschool. The entrance sign faces Fisher Street and sits approximately 475 FT back from the road. The entrance sign is currently identified as the Munster High School Auditorium and proposed to be relabeled as the Munster High School Performing Arts Center.



PROJECT SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting to install an internally illuminated, 11'-2" High by 22'-8" Wide routed face wall sign with $\frac{3}{4}$ " white acrylic push through letters, and $\frac{1}{2}$ " non-illuminated flat cut-out logo over a triangular limestone pediment located over an entrance and embedded into the beige/cream color brick façade.



ZONING CODE**WALL SIGN****TABLE 26-6.701.B SIGN TYPES
SPECIFIC STANDARDS**

| Dimensions (continued) | | | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| | Material | Letter Height (max) | Overall Height (max) | Illumi-nation | |
| Sign Size | Lot with bldg. setback < 100' | channel letter(s) | 24" | 36" | internal, external or backlit |
| | | Flat cut out acrylic, pvc, metal, wood or like material; or routed etched on wood or like material; or static neon | 36" | 48" | external or backlit |
| | Lot with bldg. setback ≥ 100' | channel letter(s) | 36" | 48" | internal, external or backlit |
| | | Flat cut out acrylic, pvc, metal, wood or like material; or routed etched on wood or like material; or static neon | 48" | 72" | external or backlit |

Additional Standards

In addition to all other applicable standards, each Wall Sign allowed under this Article:

- shall be applied to the first Story Facade and not project vertically above the roof line;
- shall not obscure any architectural element of the Building and shall be in vertical alignment with the center of an architectural element such as a storefront window or entrance, or centered over the bay or overall space occupied by the business;
- any background panel or cabinet shall be made of metal or painted or stained wood or similar material; and
- vinyl may not be used to create any design.



VARIANCE REVIEW

The variance process is established to provide relief to a property owner when, due to unique circumstances, compliance with the zoning code imposes a hardship or practical difficulty on a property owner. The BZA is under no obligation to grant a variance. It is the petitioner's responsibility to prove a hardship or practical difficulty. The BZA should ask the petition to address the criteria listed below.

Section 26-6.804. I. Deviation from Standards & Requirements (pg 392) of the Munster Zoning Code states that the basis for a variance is as follows:

g. General Standards.

A variance may be granted only if the Decision-Making Authority has made the following determinations for such variance:

- i. The practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships that would be incurred by strict application of the Use or Development standard, as applicable, are unique and not shared by all properties in the vicinity and are not self-imposed;
- ii. Such Variance is the minimum Variance that will relieve such practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships, as applicable;
- iii. Such Variance is in the spirit of the general purposes and intent of this Article as stated in Division 1; and
- iv. Such Variance is so designed as to provide reasonable consideration to, among other things, the character of the neighborhood, District, or Civic Zone, the conservation of property values in the vicinity, and the guidance of Development in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan.

h. Specific to development standards variances:

A variance from development standards may be approved or approved with conditions only if:

- i. It will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community;
- ii. The use and value of the area Adjacent to the property included in the Variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner; and
- iii. The strict application of the Development standards will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property.

The applicant has addressed these criteria in Exhibit B

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds all documents are in order to proceed with a public hearing and recommends the BZA review the Developmental Variance Conditions of Approval Form found in Exhibit B, as well as scheduling a public hearing for BZA25-007 for October 14, 2025.

MOTION

The Board of Zoning Appeals may consider the following motions:

Motion to schedule BZA25-007, a Developmental Standards Variances request to install a new MUNSTER HIGH SCHOOL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER sign that will exceed the permitted height and over an architectural element of the building for October 14, 2025, including all discussion and findings.