



BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS STAFF REPORT

To: Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals

From: Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director

Meeting Date: November 18, 2025

Agenda Item: BZA 25-007

Application Type: Developmental Standards Variance

Hearing: Continued Discussion, Public Hearing open and closed on 10/14/25

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 details.

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: Applicant seeking approval

Additional Actions Required: Findings of Fact

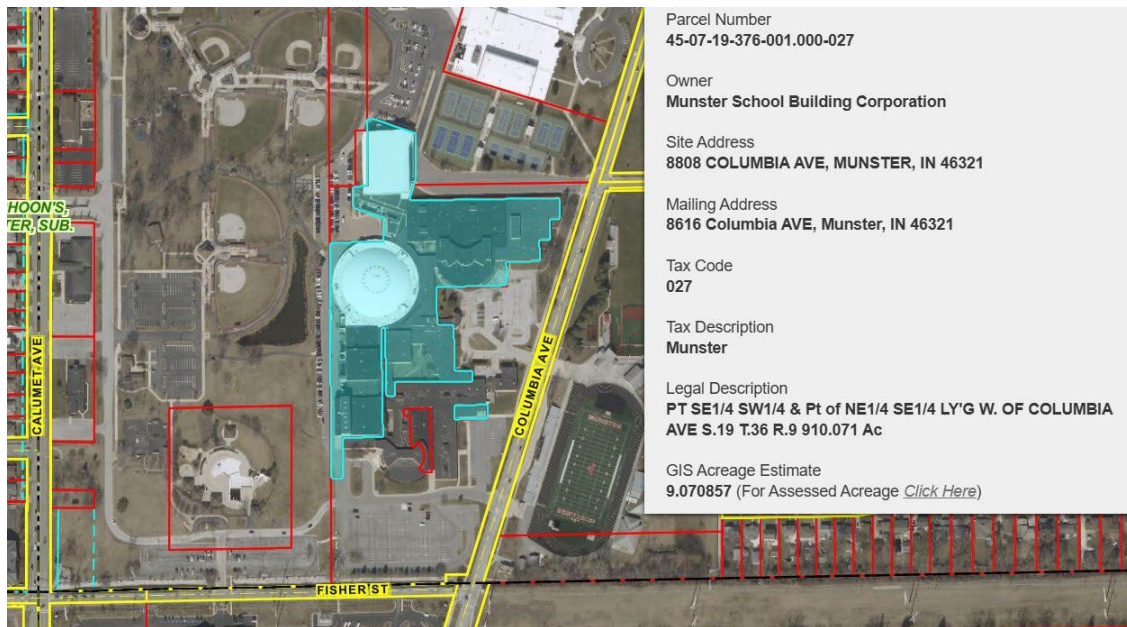
Staff Recommendation: Review Conditions of Approval Questions
Review of Zoning Code(s)
Approve the redesigned sign.

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

At the October 14, 2025 Public Hearing, Sean O'Brien from Legacy Sign Group explained that the limestone was stained and cracked, and the I-beams were faded and that the school wanted to modernize this entrance and improve visibility. The BZA noted that the proposed lettering did not match existing signage on the pool or main office and asked if the intent was to standardize signage across the campus. The board requested that the applicant revise the sign design to preserve the I-beams while covering the limestone.



The applicant has returned with a revised sign and is requesting to install an internally illuminated, 9'-3" 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 the triangular limestone pediment at the building entry.

**APPLICABLE ZONING CODE****WALL SIGN****TABLE 26-6.701.B SIGN TYPES
SPECIFIC STANDARDS****Dimensions (continued)**

Sign Size	Material	Letter Height (max)	Overall Height (max)	Illumi-nation
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
	channel letter(s)	36"	48"	internal, external or backlit
Lot with bldg. setback ≥ 100'	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 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

Staff finds that the proposed internally illuminated wall sign with push-thru acrylic lettering is not consistent with the overall sign iconography on the building, which are of individual wall mounted lettering design. Individual or cutout backlit lettering and logo may have been an alternative option for sign and lettering consistency. However, staff finds that the revised sign design maintains the exposed I-beam architectural element while covering the limestone pediment feature, as suggested by the BZA. Staff further finds that the proposed internally illuminated wall sign will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, or general welfare of the community. Additionally, the strict application of the zoning ordinance would create practical difficulty in meeting the required height and overall square footage necessary to adequately cover the architectural feature of the limestone pediment.

MOTION

The Board of Zoning Appeals may consider the following motions:

Motion to APPROVE BZA25-007, a Developmental Standards Variance request to allow the installation of a new Munster High School Performing Arts Center wall sign, not to exceed 10 feet in height by 23 feet in width, to be mounted over the existing limestone pediment above the auditorium entrance, including all discussion and findings.