



BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS STAFF REPORT

To: Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals

From: Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director

Meeting Date: December 9, 2025

Agenda Item: BZA 25-010

Application Type: Developmental Standards Variance

Hearing: Public Hearing

Summary: Applicant is seeking a Developmental Standards Variance from TABLE 26-6. 405. B. CIVIC ZONE STANDARDS: Lighting to reference SECTION 26-6.405.Q Private Lighting Standards 2.b., 3.c. and TABLE 26-6.26-6.405.Q-1 PRIVATE LIGHTING TYPES to increase the permitted height, color temperature, and head type at 8718 White Oak Avenue, Elliott Elementary

Applicant: Sean Begley, School Town of Munster Director of Operations

Property Address: 8718 White Oak Avenue

Current Zoning: CZ – Civic Zone (Elliott Elementary School)

Adjacent Zoning: North: CD-3. R2 – Single Family Residential
South: CD-3. R1 – Single Family Residential
East: CD-3. R1 – Single Family Residential
West: CD-3. R1 – Single Family Residential

Action Requested: Open Public Hearing

Additional Actions Required: Findings of Fact

Staff Recommendation: Review of Zoning Code(s)
Review Conditions of Approval Questions
Approve Light Fixture Head Type and Color Temperature
Deny Light Pole Height

Attachments:

1. Exhibit A: Application
2. Exhibit B: Conditions of Approval
3. Exhibit C: Site Plan
4. Exhibit D: Photometrics
5. Exhibit E: Lighting Specs

PROJECT LOCATION

The site of the proposed variance is located at Elliott Elementary, located south of 35th Street, and west of White Oak Avenue adjacent residential homes to the south along Janice Lane and to the west, residential homes along Greenlawn Drive.

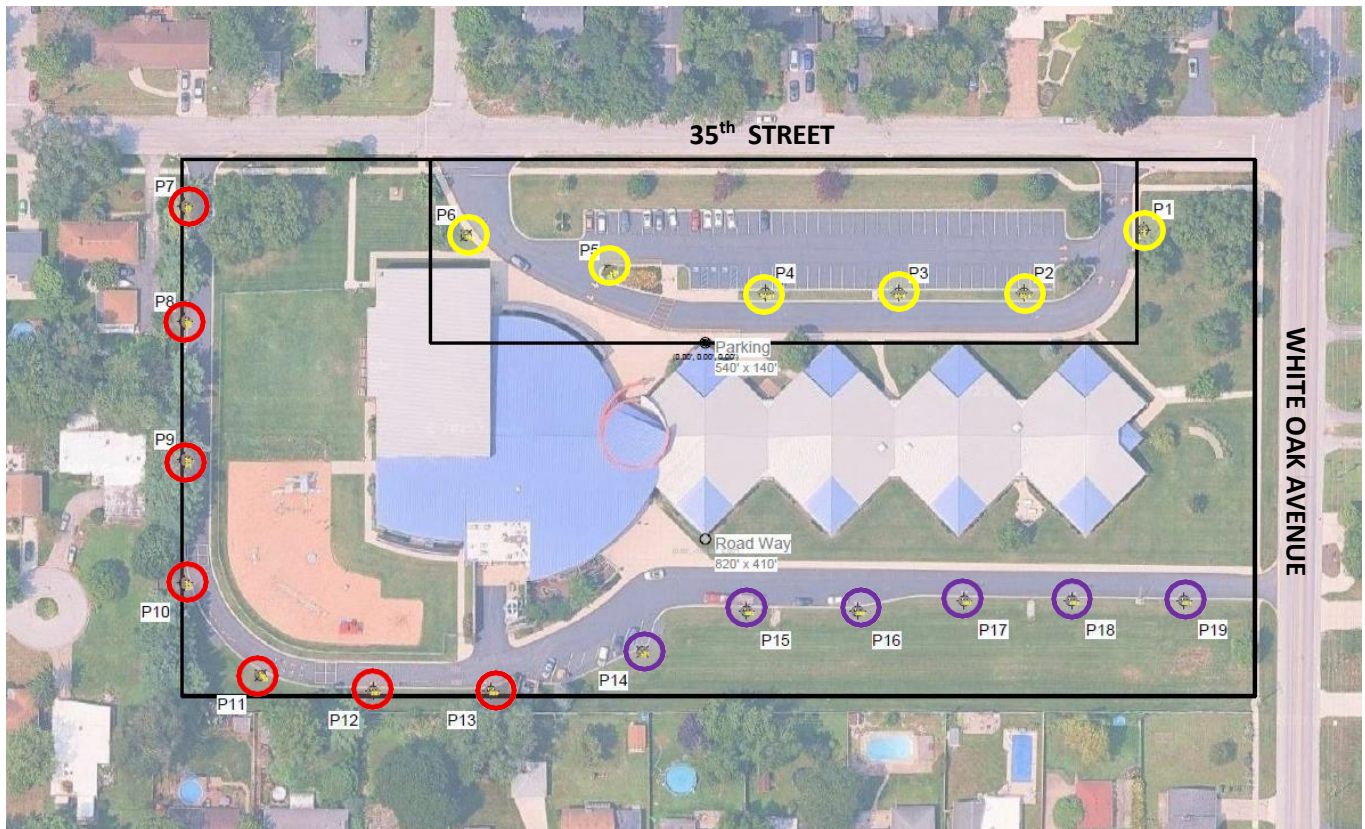
**PROJECT SUMMARY**

The applicant, School Town of Munster, would like to replace a total of nineteen (19) parking lights at Elliott Elementary School fronting along 35th Street and White Oak Avenue. Also, adjacent the rear yards of residential homes along Janice Lane and Greenlawn Drive. Six (6) parking lot lights fronting 35th Street; six (6) parking lot lights along the rear drive aisle off White Oak Ave., and seven (7) pole drive aisle lights along the school and residential shared lot lines. All pole lights are to replace the existing height (25'), similar light head shape (shielded down light source), and same color temperature (5,000K).

Highlighted in yellow, purple, red, and numbered below are the location of the nineteen (19) existing parking lot pole lights proposed to be replaced at the same location, height, similar head type, and color temperature.

Light Pole Locations – 25' High with off-road light head types at, LED 5,000 K

- 6 pole lights fronting 35th Street
- 6 pole lights along rear drive aisle
- 7 pole lights at school/residential property line



ZONING CODE REQUIREMENTS

The following standards and requirements are applicable within all Districts and Civic Zones, except as otherwise noted:

1. Areas to be Lighted.

Except in Districts CD-3, CD-3.R1, CD-3.R2, CD-3.R3, and CD-4.R4, and SD-PUD, all Parking Areas, Parking Lots, Parking Structures, and accessways within the Lot shall be lighted.

2. Lighting Standards or Poles.

a. Lighting standards shall comply with **Table 26-6.405.Q-1 (Private Lighting Types)**.

b. A lighting standard shall be of a height and design consistent with the surrounding area Buildings but in no event higher than twenty feet (20').

c. Standards shall be located at distances of four times their height.

3. Illumination.

a. Illumination of Parking Areas, Parking Lots, Parking Structures, and all pedestrian ways shall be provided at an average of 1.0-2.5 foot-candles and a minimum of 0.4 foot-candles.

b. Illumination at all Lot Lines shall meet the standard of **Table 26-6.405.Q-2 (Private Lighting Standards)**.

STANDARDS)

District	Min/Max Lighting Level at Property and Frontage Lines (in foot-candles)
CD-3, CD-3.R1, CD-3.R2, CD-3.R3	0 fc @ property line Adjacent to CD-3, CD-3.R1, CD-3.R2, CD-3.R3 Otherwise, 0-1.0 fc
CD-4.R4, CD-4.A & CD-4.B, CD-5 & SD-M	0 fc @ property line Adjacent to CD-3, CD-3.R1, CD-3.R2, CD-3.R3 Otherwise, 1.0-2.0 fc
SD-PUD	Per PUD Approved Standards

c. Color temperature of lighting shall not exceed 3000K.

4. Lighting Fixtures.

Lighting fixtures must be full cut off or fully shielded and directed down.

5. Building Spotlights Not Allowed.

Spotlights installed on Buildings shall not be used to meet the lighting requirements of this Article.

TABLE 26-6.26-6.405.Q-1 PRIVATE LIGHTING TYPES

LIGHTING TYPE	CD-3	CD-3.R1	CD-3.R2	CD-3.R3	CD-4.R4	CD-4.A, CD-4.B	CD-5	SD-M	SD-PUD	CZ
HEAD/LUMINAIRE TYPES										
Cobra Head	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
Off-Road Head	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP
Colonial Head	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	P	P
Coach Head	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	P	P
Acorn Head	P	NP	NP	NP	NP	P	P	NP	P	P

Proposed Lighting Structures:**Elliott Elementary School Parking**

Munster, IN

LIGHTING SYSTEM

Structure/Fixture Summary			
Structure ID	Structure Height	Fixt. Attachment Ht.	Fixture Qty
P1	25'	25'	2
P2-P5	25'	25'	3
P6-P19	25'	25'	2
19			42

Circuit Summary	
Circuit	Description
A	Parking

Fixture Type Summary			
Type	Circuit	Source	Wattage
LSI VALS	A	LED 5000K - 70 CRI	111W

Photometric Characteristics**Lumen maintenance factor²**

25k hours³ 0.94

50k hours³ 0.88

75k hours³ 0.83

100k hours³ 0.78

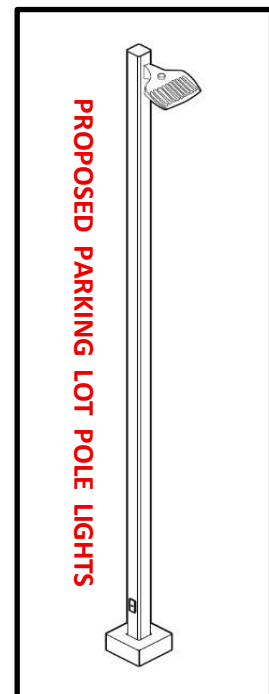
Typical Lumens⁴ 18,000

Available Color Temperature and CRI

5000 K. 70 CRI

4000 K. 70 CRI

3000 K. 80 CRI



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 has determined that the applicant has submitted a complete application, including all required supporting documents and affidavit of rights, and has satisfied the Public Notice requirements outlined in SECTION 26-6.804(K) of the Character-Based Zoning Code.

Staff has noted that the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) has previously granted Developmental Standards Variances related to Light Fixture Head Type, Light Color Temperature, and Light Fixture Pole Height for multiple sites. It is also noted that the BZA has recommended amendments to the zoning ordinance to support the more recently proposed slim-profile, off-road/cobra-head style light fixtures and lighting color temperature.

The most recent comparable action occurred under BZA 25-003 (June 2025 Findings of Fact), in which the BZA approved a Developmental Standards Variance for the School Town of Munster Athletic Field parking lot at the southeast corner of Columbia Avenue and 35th Street. That approval permitted deviation from the required Acorn/Colonial/Coach fixture head type and 3000K color temperature, while maintaining a maximum 20-foot pole height. Based on this precedent, staff finds that the previously approved variances for Light Fixture Head Type and Light Color Temperature were not injurious to public health, safety, morals, or general welfare, and did not substantially and adversely affect adjacent property values.

Staff further finds that the BZA has acknowledged the proposed Light Fixture Head Type and Light Color Temperature as acceptable standards for parking lots and drive aisles, as they help with target illumination to areas of need while minimizing light spillover onto neighboring properties and residences. Finally, staff concludes that the current request is to replace existing lighting structures with fixtures of similar characteristics for greater efficiency and therefore not a self-imposed hardship. However, strict application of the zoning code would create practical difficulties unique to this facility that are not commonly shared by surrounding properties. Granting a variance for Light Fixture Head Type and Light Color Temperature, while maintaining the 20-foot Light Pole Height, would be the minimum relief necessary to address these practical difficulties.

MOTION

The Board of Zoning Appeals may consider the following motions:

Motion to Approve a Developmental Standards Variance request for proposed “off-road/cobra” Light Fixture Head Type and 5000k Color Temperature for BZA25-010, including all discussion and findings.

Motion to Deny the Developmental Standards Variances request for the proposed twenty-five(25) feet Light Pole Height, for BZA25-010, including all discussion and findings.