



CITY OF RACINE DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: 9/23/2020

To: Mayor and Planning, Heritage and Design Commission Members

From: City Development Department, Division of Planning and Redevelopment

Division Manager: Matt Sadowski – (262) 636-9152 matthew.sadowski@cityofracine.org

Case Manager: Jeff Hintz

Location: 2430 Lathrop Avenue, located on the northwest corner of Lathrop Avenue and Blue River Avenue.

Applicant: Michael’s Signs

Property Owner: TKB INVESTMENTS LLC

Request: Consideration of a conditional use permit to operate an electronic message sign at 2430 Lathrop Avenue as allowed by [Sec. 114-1033\(b\)](#) of the Municipal Code in a B-2 Community Shopping Zone District.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY: The proposed signage is a monument style sign and would be located approximately 35 feet from the north property line, and 3 feet 6 inches from the sidewalk. The signage is approximately 66 square feet in total size, with approximately 16 square feet being an LED electronic display. The sign is proposed to be placed perpendicular to Lathrop Avenue (facing north-south).

The Zoning Ordinance classifies electronic message signage as permissible in the B-2 Community Shopping Zone District upon the issuance of a conditional use permit (114-1033).



Birdseye view of the property, indicated in red, (north is up) (image from City Pictometry)



Proposed signage

GENERAL INFORMATION

Parcel Number: [23435000](#)

Property Size: 10,675 square feet

Comprehensive Plan Map Designation: Commercial

Consistency with Adopted Plans:

The [Racine Comprehensive Plan](#) states that:

- The plan should encourage the redevelopment of older areas and commercial areas.
- Maintain and develop a land use pattern that strengthens the character and livability of the City’s downtown core, commercial and industrial areas, and neighborhoods.
- Encourage development patterns that promote efficient and sustainable use of land, that can be readily linked by transportation systems and that utilize existing public utilities and services.

Corridor or Special Design District?: N/A

Historic?: N/A

Current Zoning District: B-2 Community Shopping

Purpose of Zone District: The B2 community shopping district is intended to accommodate the needs of a much larger consumer population than is served by the neighborhood convenience district, thus a wider range of uses and structure sizes is permitted for both daily and occasional shopping.

Proposed Zoning: No change proposed

Existing Land Use: HVAC business and office.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses:

North	B-2 Community Shopping	Barbershop and salon
East	B-2 Community Shopping	Lathrop Avenue and restaurant
South	B-2 Community Shopping	Gas station and convenience store
West	R-2 Single Family Residence	Detached single unit dwellings

Operations: no changes are planned to the operation of the business as a result of this request.

ANALYSIS:

Sign Regulations (114-[Article X](#)): The proposed signage in a monument style sign and would be located at the northeast portion of the property and 3 feet 6 inches from the sidewalk. The signage is approximately 66 square feet in total size, with approximately 16 square feet being an LED electronic display. The sign is proposed to be placed perpendicular to Lathrop Avenue and will not be visible to any residences.

The plans submitted by the applicant comply with all zoning ordinance requirement; if approved, the signage could be permitted immediately by the Building and Inspection division of the City Development Department.

Exceptions to ordinance: No exceptions are required for this business to install the signage; all requirements are being met.

Additional Planning and Zoning Comments: N/A

REQUIRED FINDINGS OF FACT:

CONDITIONAL USE FINDINGS (Sec. 114-154. – Standards.)

No Conditional Use shall be recommended by the Plan Commission unless it is found that that:

- 1) The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to, or endanger, the public health, safety, morals, comfort, or general welfare.**

Staff Comments: If operated in accordance with the conditions at the end of this report and placed as indicated in the applicant submittal, staff would conclude that there is no detrimental impact to the adjacent properties or endanger the safety, health or welfare of the general area. The dimming and signage being switched off at night will help to ensure there is no disturbance to the surrounding properties and as a result, the general welfare and comfort of the area is expected to be preserved. The signage is innocuous and is likely to go unnoticed except by those who are traveling past the site, which is generally the intent and purpose of having the signage.

- 2) The conditional use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor substantially diminish and impair property values within the neighborhood.**

Staff Comments: It is likely that this sign will not be visible from any dwelling unit and only visible to those passing by in the street or sidewalk. That being said, this location would be the least injurious to other properties in the vicinity for the installation of this style of signage. The corridor is fairly busy in nature with some of the higher traffic counts for the north-south running streets in this area and it would be expected that this type of signage would be present in this corridor.

3) The establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

Staff Comments: The signage is placed in such a manner to minimize obtrusiveness to other properties in the area. The general area isn’t not anticipated to transition or change in terms of land use; predominate uses are residential (west) and a commercial corridor. The sign, if operated in accordance with the recommended conditions is expected to allow for the continuation of the existing land uses for the area.

4) Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage and/or necessary facilities have been or are being provided.

Staff Comments: Based on the plan submitted by the applicant, there will be no noticeable impact to roads, drainage or provision of utilities in this general area. Usage of the property will remain unchanged.

5) Adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress so designated as to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.

Staff Comments: The site plan submitted by the applicant does not show any changes to ingress or egress to the site. More importantly, the location of the signage complies with all location parameters in relation to the lot it will be installed on. The location is away from the intersection and preserves line of visibility for those driving vehicles.

6) The proposed conditional use is not contrary to the objectives of the current land use plan for the city.

Staff Comments: The proposed usage for the site will not change as a result of this request. The signage would be appropriate for the commercial use on the property in this setting. The property is expected to function as it has with no planned changes in operations. The signage is in a location which will impact the adjacent properties with residential uses the least. It is expected these residences to the west will not notice the signage given the location which is proposed for the installation.

7) The conditional use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located, except as such regulations may, in each instance, be modified pursuant to the recommendations of the plan commission.

Staff Comments: No exceptions are required for the electronic signage on the site. The applicable sections of the zoning ordinance as they relate to this development are being met as required.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR THE PLANNING HERITAGE AND DESIGN COMMISSION

1. Approve the request as submitted; or
2. Approve the request with conditions deemed necessary to mitigate any adverse impacts that could arise from the project; or
3. Deny the request; or
4. Defer the request to obtain more specific information about the request, subject to the consent of the applicant.
5. Defer with a continuance of the public hearing to a date certain, subject to the consent of the applicant.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: BASED ON THE FINDINGS OF FACT IN THIS REPORT, THAT THE REQUEST FROM MICHAEL’S SIGNS, SEEKING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT TO ALLOW ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SIGN 2430 LATHROP AVENUE BE APPROVED, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- a) That the plans presented to the Planning Heritage and Design Commission on September 23, 2020 be approved subject to the conditions contained herein.
- b) That the EMS be operated in accordance with the following provisions:
 - a. Maximum brightness levels for electronic or digital display signs shall not exceed 5000 nits when measured from the sign’s face at its maximum brightness, between sunrise and sunset, as determined by the National Weather Service.
 - b. Maximum brightness levels for electronic, digital display signs shall not exceed 500 nits when measured from the sign’s face at its maximum brightness, between sunset and sunrise, as determined by the National Weather Service.
 - c. Each message change shall be accomplished in one second or less, and each message shall remain in a fixed position for a minimum of 12 seconds.
 - d. The use of scrolling, flashing, blinking, chasing, or traveling lights, videos, or similar animation is prohibited except during message changes.
 - e. A maximum of four lines for electronic messages are allowed per sign face. Lettering height shall be no more than four (4) inches in height.
- c) That all conditions outlined in Common Council Resolution 14-0058 be met prior to the installation of the electronic signage on the site.
- d) That all codes and ordinances are complied with and required permits acquired.

- e) Submission to and approval by the Department of City Development of a planting list for the base of the signage.
- f) That no minor changes be made from the conditions of this permit without approval of the Planning Heritage and Design Commission, and no major changes be made from the conditions of this permit without the approval of the Common Council.
- g) That this conditional use permit is subject to Planning Heritage and Design Commission review for compliance with the listed conditions.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1) Property owner notification map indicating the subject property;
- 2) Aerial Photo indicating the subject property;
- 3) Zoning Map indicating the subject property;
- 4) Land Use Map from Comprehensive Plan, indicating the subject property;
- 5) Site photos of the property and general area; and
- 6) Submittal documents (view in legistar).



Conditional Use Request - 2430 Lathrop Avenue

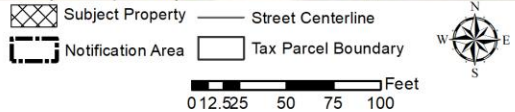




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Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community



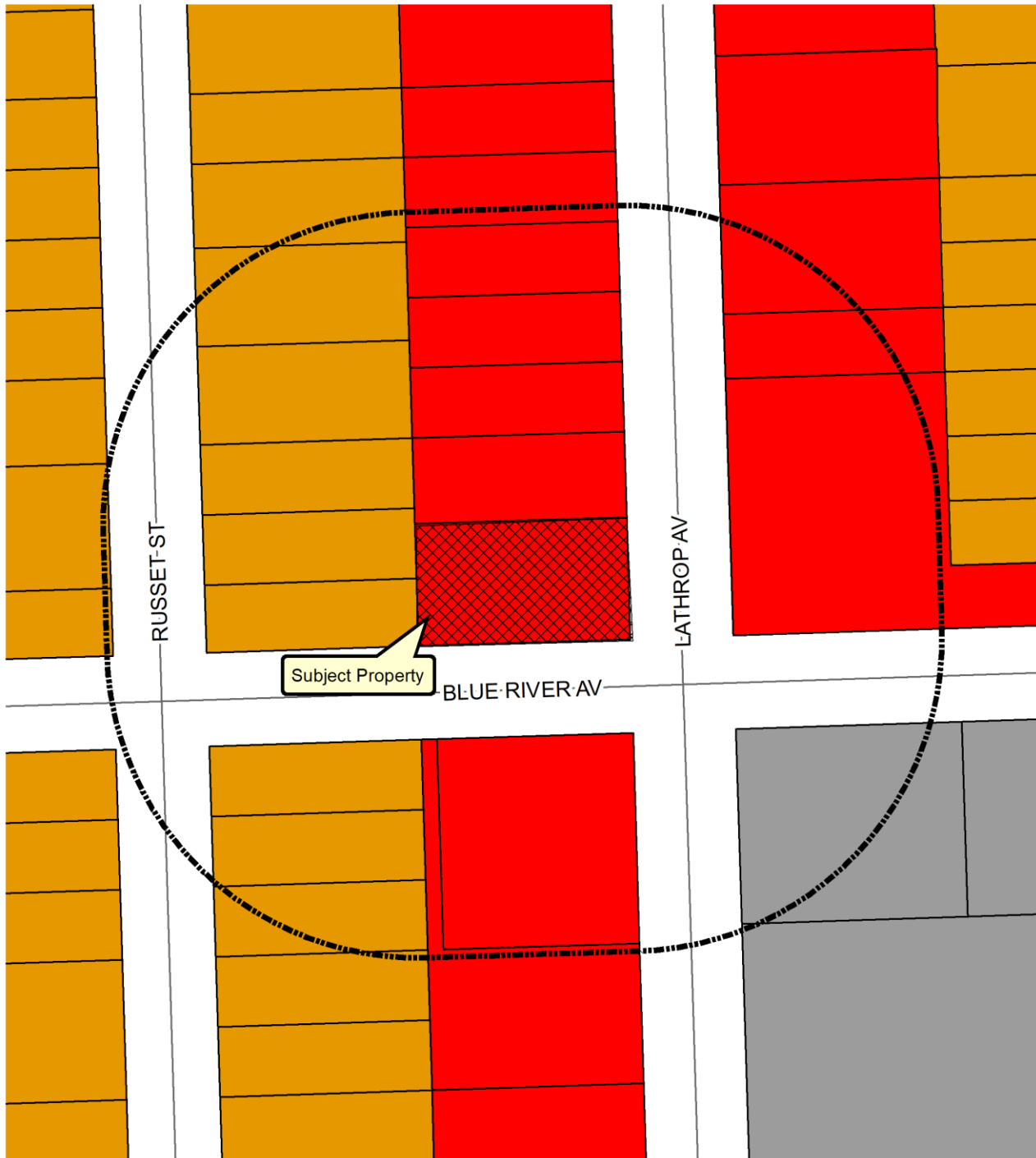


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Land Use Designation

- Commercial
- Industrial
- Medium Density Residential

Legend for map symbols:

- Subject Property (hatched box)
- Notification Area (dashed line)
- Street Centerline (solid line)
- Tax Parcel Boundary (thin solid line)

Scale: 0 12.525 50 75 100 Feet

Site Photos



Looking west at subject property from
Lathrop Avenue



Looking south from subject property



Looking south at area where signage
would be installed



Looking north from subject property