



CITY OF RACINE DEPARTMENT OF CITY DEVELOPMENT STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: 9/12/2018

To: Mayor and Plan 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: 501 Lake Avenue, located on the northeast corner of the intersection of Lake Avenue and Sam Johnson Parkway.

Applicant: Michael's Signs, authorized agent for the City of Racine.

Property Owner: City of Racine

Request: Consideration of a conditional use permit to place an electronic message sign as defined in Section 114-1033 of the Municipal Code, at the southwest corner of the property at 501 Lake Avenue for property located in a B-4 Central Business Zone District as required in section 114-1033 of the Municipal Code.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY: The City seeks to take the portion of the signage which is a changeable copy message sign and install an electronic message sign (EMS). The EMS would occupy 40 square feet. The sign is existing and the proposed EMS would occupy the same area which was previously changeable copy type signage. One EMS would face south to be visible to passersby on Lake Avenue with the other facing Sam Johnson Parkway.

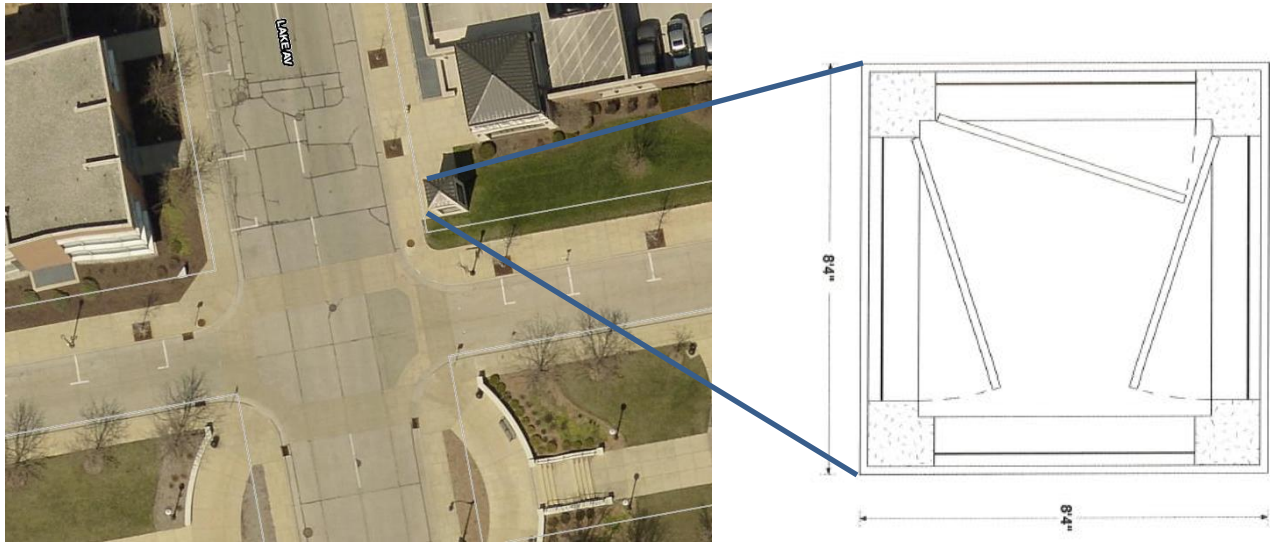
The Zoning Ordinance classifies this proposed EMS as permissible in the B-4 Central Business Zone District upon the issuance of a conditional use permit (114-1033).



Birdseye view of the property, indicated in red (image from City Pictometry).



Proposed signage rendering.



Overhead signage plan for the property; signage existing at northeast corner of Lake Avenue and Sam Johnson Parkway.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Parcel Number: [00308001](#)

Property Size: 1.3 acres

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.
- Promote redevelopment and infill in areas with existing infrastructure and services, enhancing existing residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

Corridor or Special Design District?: Downtown Area Design Review District

Historic?: N/A

Current Zoning District: B-4 Central Business

Purpose of Zone District: The B4 central business district is intended to accommodate those retail and office uses which are characteristic of the major shopping streets of the downtown area of the city, and discourage uses which detract from, or are incompatible with, pedestrian and shopping oriented traffic.

Proposed Zoning: No change proposed

Existing Land Use: Municipal parking facility.

Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses:

North	B-4 Central Business	Johnson Bank
East	B-4 Central Business	Festival Hall/surface parking
South	B-4 Central Business	Parkway and splash pad
West	B-4 Central Business	Johnson outdoors building

ANALYSIS:

Development Standards:

Density ([114-Article V](#): Article VII, Div. 5 [Bulk Regulations](#) & 8 [Lots](#)): There are no changes planned to the exterior of the building as a result of this proposal.

Standard	Required	Provided
Lot Area	No minimum	1.3 acres
Lot Frontage	30 feet	255 feet
Floor Area Ratio	8.0 maximum	1.68

Setbacks ([114-Article V](#): Article VII, Div. 6 [Development Standards](#)): No changes are planned to the structure; setbacks are not required for this property.

Building design standards (114-Secs. [735.5](#) & [736](#)): The building on the parcel complies with the requirements of 114.735.5.b.1, however this request does not include any new buildings or structural modifications to the exterior of the existing building.

Off-street parking and loading requirements (114- [Article XI](#)): Signage does not require off-street parking or loading.

Landscaping, screening and yard requirements ([114- Article V](#): Article VII, Div. 6 [Development Standards](#) & 7 [Fences and Walls](#)): The landscaping and yards on this parcel currently comply with all development regulations.

Sign Regulations (114-[Article X](#)): Signage rendering is included earlier in this report. EMS signage is limited to 25% of the total sign area for a zoning lot. For this property, that maximum would be 50 square feet, as the property is allowed to have 200 square feet of signage. The proposed electronic portion of the signage measures 40 square feet, as this is the area which the current changeable copy message portion occupied on the existing signage.

Outdoor lighting, signs ([114-Sec. 742](#)): the fixtures focus light onto the property and comply with the development requirements. The plans submitted by the applicant do not include additional lighting fixtures.

Exceptions to ordinance: none needed for this proposal.

Additional Planning and Zoning Comments: It should be noted this is actually two panels measuring five foot three inches by five foot three inches. If placed within 36 inches of one another, the sign area would only count once and this sign would comply with all requirements.

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:

- 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: The property will continue to function as a parking facility for the Civic Centre and this signage will not change the current operations on the parcel. The operational requirements listed in the conditions of approval will ensure this signage functions in a way which is not detrimental to passersby. The signage is overall, a very small portion of the property from a square footage perspective, but plays an important part of communicating information to the public. The message changes and transitions have the ability to impact passersby in a distracting way if not operated in a manner which is in compliance with the recommended conditions.

- 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: The location of the existing signage on the property coupled with the pattern of street traffic, is such that signage is only visible from two sides by passing automobiles. Pedestrians and other passersby and viewers from adjacent properties will have a view of the signage, but likely at the street level only. This limited view shed is important as EMS signage is likely to create conflicts with residential uses, especially during nighttime hours; the land use is such in this area that residential uses do exist, but are located over one block away, and thus, are unlikely to be disturbed by this proposed EMS.

- 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 on this property is an accessory function and transitioning the changeable copy message portion of the sign to an EMS will not impede development of the surrounding properties. The land uses in this area are less active and generally focus on vehicular modes of travel; to the north of the sign on both the east and west sides of Lake Avenue are parking ramp entrances and to the south is a landscaped parkway. The installation of this EMS will not impede the development patterns of the area or prevent their orderly continuance.

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

Staff Comments: The site plan submitted by the applicant does not propose any changes to the access, utilities or drainage for the site. The repurposing of this existing signage is not expected to impact the provision of utilities for the property or general area.

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 re-facing of this signage will not alter the ingress or egress to the site. The signage will not impact traffic flow or create congestion in the adjacent roadways.

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

Staff Comments: The land use plan for the City identifies this property as Commercial. This proposed usage is consistent with the objectives of the comprehensive plan. The signage is really an accessory usage on the property as the main function is a parking facility. The signage is appropriate for what would be expected within a commercial area in conjunction with the operation of an entertainment venue.

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: As previously mentioned, the signage, if faced within three feet of each other, would instead count as 20 square feet. Due to the configuration of the existing sign, coupled with the traffic patterns in the area, this placement is not practical. As such, it will count as 40 square feet, but this is still within what is allowed for the zone district.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS FOR THE PLANNING 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.

STAFF SUPPORTS THE APPLICATION FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

- Signage will offer the property a modern and updated appearance, while conveying simple messages to passersby.
- Signage is in a location which is not directly visible to any residential dwelling units.
- Signage is integrated within the existing architecture of the site and improvements on the property.

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 AN ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SIGN AT 501 LAKE AVENUE BE APPROVED, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

- a) That the plans presented to the Plan Commission on September 12, 2018 be approved subject to the conditions contained herein.
- b) That the EMS be operated in accordance with the following provisions:
 1. That the EMS have a panel installed which will reduce the overall size of each panel to 25 square feet or electronic portions of signage be reduced to be less than 50 square feet in total.
 2. 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.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.
 5. The use of scrolling, flashing, blinking, chasing, or traveling lights, videos, or similar animation is prohibited except during message changes.
 6. 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 codes and ordinances are complied with and required permits acquired.

- d) That no minor changes be made from the conditions of this permit without approval of the Plan Commission, and no major changes be made from the conditions of this permit without the approval of the Common council.
- e) That this conditional use permit is subject to Plan 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 ([click to view](#)).

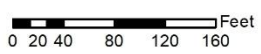


Conditional Use Request - 501 Lake Avenue



 Subject Property
 Notification Area



 Street Centerline
 Tax Parcel Boundary
 Building Footprint



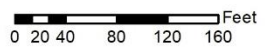


Conditional Use Request - 501 Lake Avenue



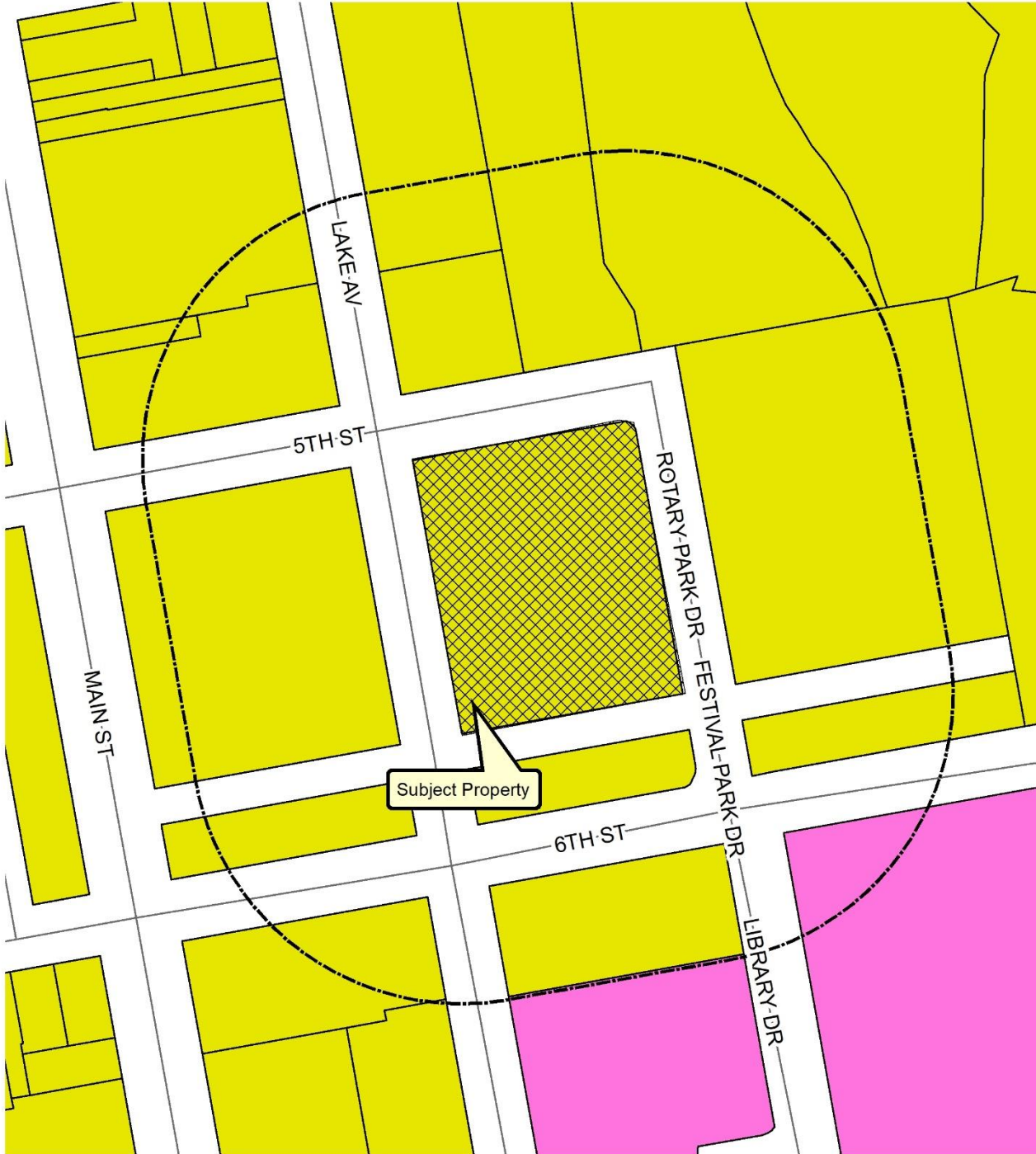
-  Subject Property
-  Notification Area

-  Street Centerline
-  Tax Parcel Boundary





Conditional Use Request - 501 Lake Avenue



Zoning Designation

B-4 O/I

Subject Property

Street Centerline

Notification Area

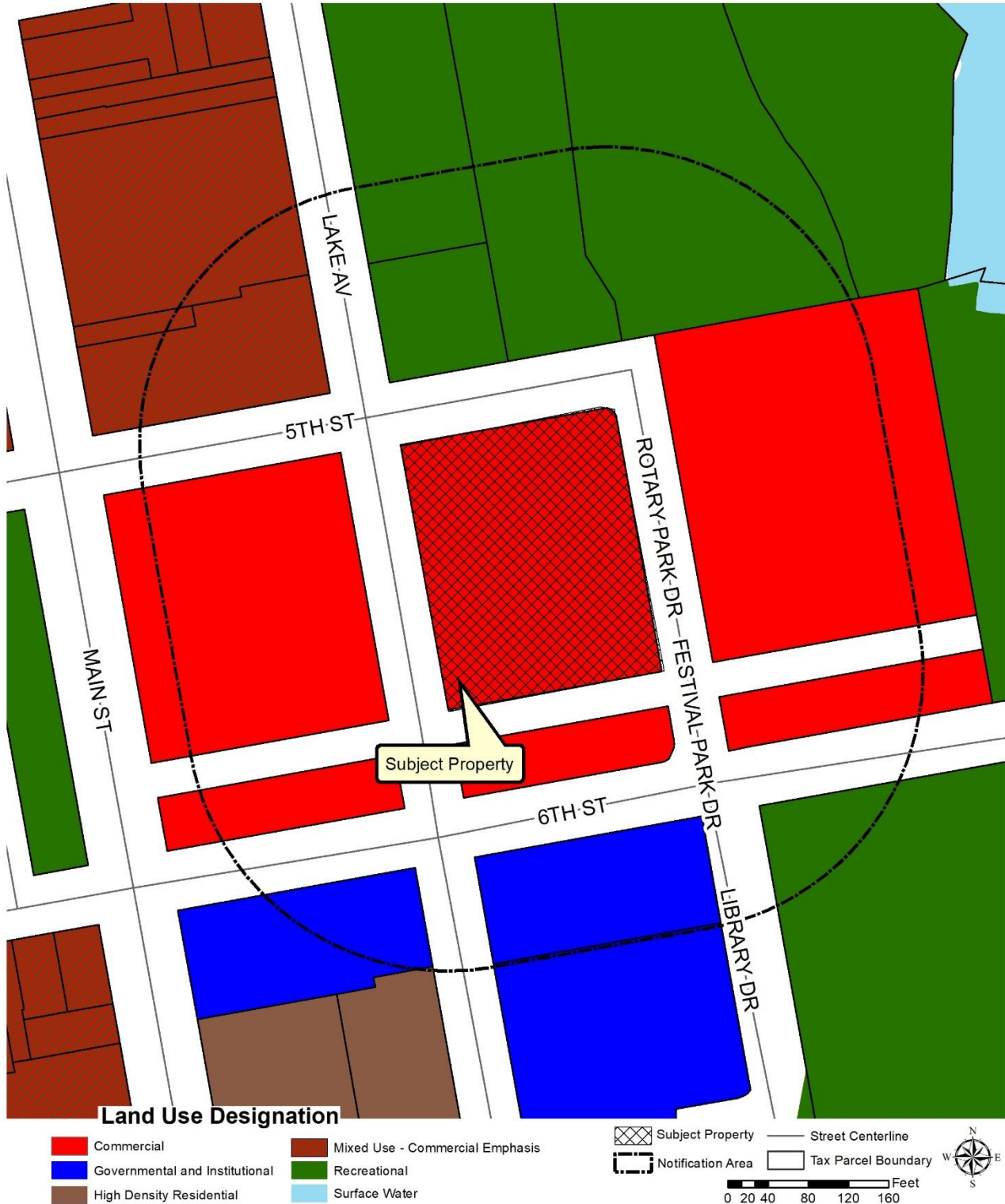
Tax Parcel Boundary

0 20 40 80 120 160 Feet





Conditional Use Request - 501 Lake Avenue



Site Photos



Looking west along Sam Johnson Parkway



Looking north along Lake Avenue



Looking east along Sam Johnson
Parkway



Looking south along Lake Avenue



Looking north from intersection of Lake
Avenue and Sam Johnson Parkway



Looking north at signage from Lake Avenue and
Sam Johnson Parkway