

STAFF DESIGN COMMISSION REPORT

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Project Name: Northwest Community Wellness Center-
Sign Variation
Project Address: 900 W. Central Road
Prepared By: Steve Hautzinger

Date Prepared: July 30, 2020

PETITION INFORMATION:

DC Number: 20-023
Petitioner Name: Allen C. Jensen
Petitioner Address: Northwest Community Hospital
800 W. Central Road
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Meeting Date: August 11, 2020

Requested Action(s):

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-701 Electronic Message Signs, to allow an electronic message sign facing Central Road, where electronic message signs may only be permitted at designated major arterial commercial corridors.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-302.a, to allow a total of five ground signs, where only two ground signs are allowed.
3. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-302.a, to allow a ground sign with a 152-foot separation, where 800 feet minimum separation between ground signs is required.

ANALYSIS:

Summary:

The subject design is being forwarded to the Design Commission for review pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Municipal Code, specifically Section 6-501 (e)(1), which states that the Design Commission "shall review all Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Permit and Sign Permit applications for new construction and those improvements which affect the architectural design of the building, site improvements or signage to determine whether it meets with the standards, requirements and purposes of the Design Guidelines and Chapter 30, Sign Regulations."

The petitioner is seeking approval for an Electronic Message Ground Sign for the Northwest Community Wellness Center which is a fitness, cardiac care, and rehabilitation facility that is part of the overall Northwest Community Hospital campus. The hospital campus has extensive existing signage including two existing entry ground signs facing Central Road, two entry ground signs facing Kirchoff Road, as well as numerous internal directional ground signs. There are no changes currently proposed to the internal directional ground signs, so the focus of this report is on the main ground signs facing the roads.

In 1995, a Campus Master Plan for the hospital was approved per Ordinance 95-013. The Master Plan included plans for signage throughout the hospital campus with a requirement to have a consistent design and unifying theme. The Master Sign Plan includes four main entry ground signs not to exceed 16'-6" in height and 80 sf in area. In 1996, Phase I of the Master Sign Plan was approved, which included the first main entry ground sign located at the southwest driveway into the site (Sign #120 on the Site Plan). Then, in 1999, the second and final Phase of the Master Sign Plan was approved, which included the three other main entry ground signs located at all of the main driveway entrances into the hospital campus (Sign #'s 01, 65, & 31 on the Site Plan).

The proposed sign is intended to identify and serve the Wellness Center facility, which currently has no signage facing the street. The proposed design has a style that is consistent with the existing entry ground signs, but it is a smaller version at 10-feet tall, 28.7 sf, where the main ground signs are 14-feet tall, 58.5 sf.

Code allows only one ground sign per street frontage, and the proposed ground sign for the Wellness Center was not included in the original Master Plans, so a variation is required to allow a fifth ground sign on the property. Additionally, code requires a minimum separation of 800-feet between ground signs, so a variation is required to allow only 125 feet of separation between the proposed sign location and the existing adjacent ground sign.

Refer to Table 1 below for a summary of the existing and proposed ground signs.

Table 1: Existing and Proposed Ground Signs Summary:

Ground Sign	Frontage (one sign allowed per street frontage)	Sign Height (16'-6" allowed)	Sign Area	Separation Distance (800 feet minimum required)	Remarks
EXISTING					
Sign 120	Central Road	14'	58.5 sf	700'	Approved in 1996, Phase I Sign Plan
Sign 01	Central Road	14'	58.5 sf	700'	Approved in 1999, Phase II Sign Plan
Sign 31	Kirchoff Road	14'	58.5 sf	1,110'	Approved in 1999, Phase II Sign Plan
Sign 65	Kirchoff Road	14'	58.5 sf	1,110'	Approved in 1999, Phase II Sign Plan
PROPOSED					
Sign 08	Central Road	10'	28.7 sf	152'	Variations Required for Number of Signs and Separation

Electronic Message Sign:

In 2017, Chapter 30 Sign Code was amended to allow electronic message signs along certain major arterial commercial corridors, away from residential zoning districts. The subject property is in a location where electronic message signs are not permitted, therefore a variation is required. The proposed electronic message sign does meet all of the other code requirements for an electronic message sign as summarized in Table 2 below.

Additionally, per Chapter 30, Section 30-705.h, the operation of an electronic message sign is required to abide by the following restrictions, to which the petitioner has provided written agreement:

1. The electronic display shall be static displays only with no scrolling, fading, flashing, animation, video, or sound.
2. Messages must be displayed for a minimum of 10 seconds.
3. Auto-dimming photocell technology is required to automatically adjust the display brightness to .3 footcandles maximum above ambient lighting conditions.
4. Off-premises advertising is not allowed.
5. Only permitted to be illuminated the same hours that the business is open.

Table 2: Summary of the Proposed Electronic Message Sign:

ITEM	CODE REQUIREMENT	REMARKS
Location:	Section 30-701: Electronic Message Signs are only allowed in designated major arterial commercial corridors.	Variation required to allow an electronic message sign on a non-designated road.
Setback:	Section 30-301.b: 15 feet minimum setback is required for ground signs in an Institutional Zoning District.	Meets requirement.
Style:	Section 30-705.a: Electronic Message Signs are only permitted on monument style ground signs (pole mounted not allowed).	Meets requirement.
Height:	Section 30-705.a: Electronic Message Signs cannot be taller than ten feet.	Meets requirement.
Display:	Section 30-705.b: Only high resolution, full color electronic displays are allowed.	Meets requirement.
Arrangement:	Section 30-705.c: The electronic portion of the sign must be the lower portion of the sign.	Meets requirement.
Size:	Section 30-705.c: Ground Sign maximum size = 80 sf Electronic Message Sign maximum size = 26.4 sf (33% of 80 sf) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "nch WELLNESS CENTER" sign = 16.7 sf ▪ <u>Electronic Message Sign</u> = 12 sf ▪ Total Signage = 28.7 sf 	Meets requirement.
Quantity:	Section 30-705.d: Only one electronic message sign per property is permitted.	Meets requirement.
Spacing:	Section 30-705.e: Minimum 300 feet spacing is required between electronic message signs on the same side of any street.	Meets requirement.
Separation from Residential:	Section 30-705.f: Electronic Message Signs are not permitted within 300 feet of any property being used for a residential use.	Meets requirement.
Orientation:	Section 30-705.g: Electronic Message Signs must be oriented perpendicular to the roadway.	Meets requirement.

Electronic Sign Conditional Review Criteria:

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-702 sets out the criteria for conditional approval of an electronic message sign:

- a. *The Electronic Message Sign will not create a traffic hazard or demonstrable negative impact on nearby properties or be detrimental to the safety of persons residing or working in the vicinity; and*
- b. *The Electronic Message Sign will serve the best interests of the Village, and will be desirable for the public convenience; and*
- c. *The design of the Electronic Message Sign is compatible with the essential character of the locality, such as the sign enclosure, materials and scale; and*
- d. *The business demonstrates a valid need for an Electronic Message Sign. The business must explain how the sign will be used, and why their business needs an Electronic Message Sign.*

Sign Variation Criteria:

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-902 sets out the criteria for granting a sign variation.

- a. *That the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the Petitioner.*
- b. *That the granting of said variation will not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare;*
- c. *That the variation will serve to relieve the Petitioner from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship, and will not merely serve to provide the Petitioner with a competitive advantage over similar businesses;*
- d. *That the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality;*
- e. *That the Petitioner's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this chapter.*

The petitioner has submitted a letter addressing the conditional review criteria for the electronic message sign as well as the sign variation criteria, which in summary states the need for the proposed sign to provide visibility for the Northwest Community Wellness Center and to communicate related Healthcare specific information as provided by the Wellness Center.

Staff Comments:

The Northwest Community Hospital campus is a unique entity in Arlington Heights, and the Wellness Center is a unique facility within that campus. The Wellness Center is available for fitness memberships to the general public, as well as serving a large cardiac care patient population. Currently, there is no signage facing the street to identify the Wellness Center. Since it is a stand-alone building with unique services that is open to the general public, Staff does not object to some signage for the Wellness Center. Additionally, the location of the proposed sign makes sense, adjacent to the driveway in front of the building, and it is appropriate that the scale of the proposed sign is smaller than the primary hospital entry signs. However, five signs for the hospital campus is a concern, and the Design Commission should evaluate if it is becoming excessive.

In regards to the proposed electronic message display, Staff does have concerns about opening up electronic signs on corridors not specified in the ordinance, and the potential competitive advantage that an electronic sign could provide over other fitness centers. However, in 2017, when the Village-wide matter of electronic signage was studied, one option that was considered was to allow electronic signage for unique uses, such as major tourism venues. However, the Design Commission and Village Board decided that it would be better to review such unique requests on a case-by-case basis as sign variations. The Design Commission should evaluate if the Wellness Center and overall hospital campus is an appropriate example of a unique use where an electronic sign may be appropriate. The surrounding context is primarily commercial, where an electronic sign should not have a negative impact on residential uses.

RECOMMENDATION:

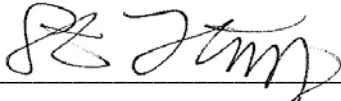
It is recommended that the Design Commission **evaluate** the following sign variations for the *Northwest Community Wellness Center* at 900 W. Central Road:

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-701 Electronic Message Signs, to allow an electronic message sign facing Central Road, where electronic message signs may only be permitted at designated major arterial commercial corridors.
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This recommendation is based on the plans received 7/16/20, Federal, State, and Village Codes, regulations, and policies, and the issuance of all required permits, and the following:

1. Evaluate if five ground signs would be excessive for the hospital campus.
2. Evaluate concerns about opening up electronic signs on corridors not specified in the ordinance.
3. Evaluate the potential competitive advantage that an electronic sign could provide over other fitness centers.
4. This review deals with architectural design only and should not be construed to be an approval of, or to have any other impact on, any other zoning and/or land use issues or decisions that stem from zoning, building, signage or any other reviews. In addition to the normal technical review, permit drawings will be reviewed for consistency with the Design Commission and any

other Commission or Board approval conditions. It is the architect/homeowner/builder's responsibility to comply with the Design Commission approval and ensure that building permit plans comply with all zoning code, building permit and signage requirements.



July 30, 2020

Steve Hautzinger AIA, Design Planner
Department of Planning & Community Development

c: Charles Witherington-Perkins, Director of Planning and Community Development, Petitioner, DC File 20-023