

VILLAGE OF LOMBARD
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW GROUP REPORT

TO: Lombard Plan Commission

HEARING DATE: June 19, 2006

FROM: Department of Community
Development

PREPARED BY: William J. Heniff, AICP
Senior Planner

TITLE

PC 06-18; 1000 North Rohlwing Road (Northgate Shopping Center): The petitioner requests that the Village approve the following actions for the subject property located within the B3 Community Shopping District:

1. An amendment to an annexation agreement (Ordinance 3336) approving an alternate landscape plan (Exhibit D).
2. A conditional use for a planned development, with the following deviations to the Lombard Sign Ordinance:
 - a. A deviation from Section 153.234 to allow for two shopping center identification signs of 372 square feet in sign area and one sign of 299 square feet in sign area, where a maximum of one-hundred fifty (150) square feet is permitted;
 - b. A deviation from Section 153.234 to allow for two free-standing signs of forty-five feet (45') in overall height, where a maximum of thirty-five feet (35') is permitted;
 - c. A deviation from Section 153.210 (D) to allow for an increase of an electronic message board from two feet (2') to five feet (5') in height with a display screen greater than eighteen inches in height.
 - d. A deviation to allow for up to three additional wall signs of up to 275 square feet in sign surface area for the benefit of tenants within the Northgate Shopping Center, in lieu of the provisions set forth in Section 153.505 (B)(19)(b).
3. A use exception to allow for a storage center to be located within the proposed planned development, with a variation from the use and area standards set forth in Section 155.508 (B)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Owner/Petitioners:

Lombard Northgate LLC
2901 Butterfield Road
Oak Brook, IL 60523

BBPV LLC
1000-46 Rohlwing Road
Lombard, IL 60148

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Existing Land Use: Retail Commercial Shopping Center
Size of Property: 27.31 acres
Comprehensive Plan: Recommends Community Commercial
Existing Zoning: B3 Community Commercial District

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use:

- North: Property within the Village of Addison zoned M4 Planned Office Research Industrial; developed as Roman Candles, Inc. industrial and commercial development
- South: OPD – Heron Point Office Planned Development; improved as a hotel and office building; and R1 Single-Family Residence District – unimproved property
- East: R1 Single-Family Residence District – developed as a mix of single-family residences, contractor’s and storage yards and an automotive repair use
- West: B3 Community Shopping District – Interstate 355

ANALYSIS

SUBMITTALS

This report is based on the following documentation, which was filed with the Department of Community Development:

1. Petition for Public Hearing and response to Standards.
2. Existing survey of existing landscape plantings, prepared by survey prepared by Rolf C. Campbell & Associates, dated June 20, 2005, with annotations.
3. Signage plan for I-355 /Sidney, North Avenue and Route 53/Sidney, prepared by Olympic Signs, revised date of June 9, 2006.
4. Comparable sign package and photograph for wall sign for Four Flags Shopping Center, Niles, IL, prepared by Olympic sign, dated March 28, 2006.

DESCRIPTION

The current property owners/petitioners are seeking approval of a number of actions to enhance the ability to make the center attractive to existing and potential business establishments. These actions include an amendment to the landscape plan as well as signage relief to provide for additional freestanding signs and wall signs on the property. To achieve this goal, the petitioner is also seeking approval of a conditional use for a planned development. This will allow for additional flexibility in site design and development standards in consideration of the unique site-specific constraints associated with the property.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW COMMENTS

Private Engineering Services

The Private Engineering Services Division notes that all of the landscaping along the west and south sides of the building, with exception of the northernmost 250 feet along I-355 and the easternmost 100 feet along North Avenue, is in a special management area (i.e. 100-yr floodplain, wetland and/or 50-foot wetland buffer), which is regulated by DuPage County. Therefore, DuPage County would have to review and approve any proposed cutting of trees and bushes in that area. Total avoidance of that area is recommended.

Engineering - Public Works

Public Works Engineering notes that all signage must be placed outside of any public utility easement areas and/or clear line of sight areas.

Fire and Building

The Fire Department/Bureau of Inspectional Services notes that a building permit will be required for any new signage on the premises. The larger freestanding signs shall also require structural and wind load calculations.

Planning

The subject property was annexed into the Village in 1990 associated with the approval of the Northgate Shopping Center development. A companion annexation agreement set forth the terms and conditions of the annexation. The agreement also tied the annexation to a specific set of plans and specifications for the subject property – including a site plan, signage plan and a landscape plan. The property owner that developed the subject property followed these specifications within their development.

Since the 1990 approval and construction of the site with a shopping center, the subject property has been sold on two separate occasions. In the late 1990s, the Northgate Theatres ceased operations. In 2003, an anchor tenant of the shopping center, Menard's, closed their operations within the center. Since then, the Menard's space has remained vacant. The theatre site received conditional use approvals for a teen club and a religious institution, but as of June 2006, both of these uses have since left the center. The property is currently occupied by the Harlem Furniture store (which was recently renovated) as well as smaller tenants occupying space at the southern end of the center.

Compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan recommends that the subject property be developed as a Community Commercial use. The Comprehensive Plan definition of a Community Commercial area is that it is a commercial area which provides services extending beyond daily living needs and includes comparison shopping goods. The petitioner's request to undertake activities on the property to enhance the use of the property as a retail center is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Establishing the site within a planned development would also be consistent with the Plan's objectives. However, staff finds that other aspects of the request (denoted later in this report) are not consistent with the Plan objectives.

Compatibility with the Zoning Ordinance

The shopping center is a permitted use within the B3 District. No expansions to the shopping center are proposed as part of this petition. However, within the planned development, the petitioner is requesting approval of a landscape plan amendment, signage deviations and a use exception as part of the planned development approval.

Landscape Plan Amendment

The Northgate Shopping Center Property is subject to the provisions of an Annexation Agreement between the Village and the property owner (Ordinance 3336). The agreement specifically denoted the landscape planting that would be required as part of the development. The petitioner proposes to substantially modify the landscape plan approved by the agreement. While the agreement provides that such an amendment could conceptually be reviewed and approved by staff, provided that the revised planting met code. However, Counsel noted that to incorporate the amended plan into the annexation agreement, an amendment should be undertaken.

The petitioner notes that the primary purpose of this request was to clear overgrowth or excessive vegetation surrounding the subject property in order to provide greater exposure of the shopping center from adjacent roadways. The amended landscape plan proposes to remove selected plant

materials from the Northgate Shopping Center property and adjacent public rights-of-way. The revised plan consists of the following elements:

- Removal of almost all existing vegetation within the Illinois State Toll Highway Authority (ISTHA) property abutting the tollway itself. This removal is outside the boundary of the subject property. Provided that the petitioner secures the approval of ISTHA, the petitioner can remove the plantings without Village approval.
- Thinning and/or removal of plantings along the west property line and on the ISTHA property located east of the northbound entrance ramp to I-355. The petitioner proposes to remove plant materials in order to provide greater exposure to the shopping center and to ensure that any freestanding or wall signage on the property can be viewed from the adjacent rights-of-way.

Staff would like to see at a minimum, the perimeter lot landscaping provisions met along the west property line, per the Zoning Ordinance regulations. In consideration of the IDRC comments noted above, the Village sees a benefit in preserving a significant amount of the landscaping screening near the loading and delivery areas (Areas E & F on the plan). In response to staff comments, the petitioner is focusing their plant thinning activities along the west property line north of the Harlem Furniture loading docks. The petitioner proposes to clear most of the mature trees north of the docks, and leave the requisite number of trees needed to meet the minimum requirements expressed in the Zoning Ordinance (i.e., 1 tree every 75 feet around the detention area/property line, with the ability to cluster the trees). This can be accomplished through the preservation of selected existing trees and/or removing existing trees and planting new lower growing parkway tree species. The final selection of trees to be removed or preserved will be determined by a final site inspection of the trees and approval of the removal by staff. Staff does not object to this approach.

- While not depicted on your landscape plan, there are foundation plantings located at the base of the Harlem Furniture west wall. Staff can conceptually support modifying the plant materials along the foundation wall and replanting it with lower growth plant materials. Staff will want to review a landscape plan with the new materials denoted on the plan with authorization from Harlem Furniture.
- Along Route 53 (Rohlwing Road) and Route 64 (North Avenue), the petitioner would like to thin the plant materials as well. The need to thin or remove the plant materials is requested to provide better visibility of the shopping center itself. Since the center is at a significantly lower elevation than Route 53 itself, the ability to see the center is more difficult. It also appears that many of the plant materials installed as part of the initial approval were never thinned or trimmed in recent years. As such, the site does appear to be overgrown in many

areas. Staff has field inspected the preliminary landscape plan prepared by the petitioner and made several comments regarding the materials to be removed. Staff also attempted to provide at least one tree every 40 feet, consistent with code. The tree removal also focuses upon those view corridors necessary to see the building and/or associated signage. The petitioner has agrees to incorporate staff’s comments into its final plan.

- The petitioner is not proposing removal of any other perimeter lot or parking lot plant materials. However, they may prune selected trees as warranted or needed.
- In consideration of the removal of plant materials along Route 53, staff noted that a small segment (approximately 50 lineal feet) of the sidewalk within the Route 53 right-of-way is in disrepair. This may or may not be associated with the adjacent plantings. Staff recommends that with the removal of these plantings that the sidewalk be repaired/replaced accordingly.

Conditional Use – Planned Development

Included with the petition is a request for conditional use approval for a planned development. As the subject property meets the minimum lot width and area requirements and since the intent of planned developments is to address the unique attributes surrounding the existing and proposed land uses, staff recommends the establishment of a planned development for this site. Moreover, the planned development process will provide greater flexibility to consider unique parking and signage elements associated with the shopping center. Staff also notes that most other comparable shopping centers in the Village (e.g., High Point Center, Highlands of Lombard, Lombard Pines) are within planned developments. As such staff does not object to this request.

Signage Deviations

The petitioner is proposing a modified sign package for the center with the following signage characteristics. Please note that the modified sign submittal is less than what was originally advertised as part of the public hearing petition. The items that require signage relief are shaded within the table below.

Signage	Existing	Permitted	Proposed
Freestanding Sign (I-355)			
Sign Size	none	Max. 150 sq. ft. along state ROW	Approx. 360 sq. ft.
Sign Height	none	Max. 35 feet	45 feet
Automatic Changeable Copy (ACC) Sign	none	1 sign per frontage; < 2’ high cabinet size	4’ high cabinet
Freestanding Sign (North Avenue)			
Sign Size	117 sq. ft.	Max. 150 sq. ft. along state ROW	Approx. 360 sq. ft.

Sign Height	17' 8" feet	Max. 35 feet	45 feet
Automatic Changeable Copy (ACC) Sign	none	1 sign per frontage; < 2' high cabinet size	4' high cabinet
Freestanding Sign (Route 53/Sidney corner)			
Sign Size	59 sq. ft.	Max. 150 sq. ft. along state ROW	Approx. 150 sq. ft.
Sign Height	25 feet	Max. 35 feet	23 feet
Wall Signs (along west elevation of building)			
Sign Size	1 sign (Harlem Furniture of 275 sq. ft. in size)	2 times frontage of tenant space; cap at 300 sq. ft.	3 additional @ 275 sq. ft. each for interior tenants – to be placed along Harlem west elevation

Freestanding Sign Along I-355

The proposed freestanding sign along I-355 is proposed to be located at the far northwest corner of the Harlem Furniture property in order to maximize visibility to traffic along the tollway. Such signage has been commonly used for retail destination centers such as regional outlet malls. The petitioner is proposing a total sign height of 45 feet in order to allow for signage visibility over the adjacent noise barrier walls and overpass grade changes. The petitioner is also proposing the overall sign area to be about 360 square feet in sign surface area. The large sign size is intended to include primary tenants in the center at a size that would be readable to motorists traveling at higher speeds. Lastly, the proposed sign includes an automatic changeable sign (ACC) sign component of four feet in height. This sign is also intended to provide changeable text at a size that is readable to motorists.

Staff notes that the Village Sign Ordinance does not have any special signage regulations for signage along limited-access expressways. As such, any increase in sign size and height must seek signage relief. The proposed sign is unique in the Village as the subject property is the only B-district property in the Village that abuts a tollway. From an economic development perspective, the proposed sign could also serve as a catalyst to secure a regional destination retailer to the property. Moreover, the larger sign provides the opportunity for the southbound motorist to see the sign prior to the North Avenue intersection and make necessary traffic movements safely. As such, staff is supportive of the sign along I-355, provided that the ACC sign is monochromatic, advertises business establishments located on the subject property only and is operated in compliance with Village Code.

Freestanding Sign Along North Avenue

The petitioner is also requesting an identical sign for the North Avenue frontage as is proposed along I-355. However, from staff's perspective, such signage raises a number of concerns, including:

- Sign size – unlike the I-355 sign, prevailing traffic speeds are significantly lower along North Avenue. Eastbound traffic is also slowed by the I-355 entrance ramp traffic light

and is at a distinctively higher elevation than the center itself. Using “Sign Graphics and the Law” as a reference guide, this manual would suggest that up to 230 square feet would be appropriate. The proposed sign would exceed code.

- Consistency with signage on other like properties – the proposed signage would be significantly larger than other signage along North Avenue and the sign would be among the largest freestanding signs in the Village. Unlike the I-355 sign, many of the tenant’s wall signs in the center are visible from North Avenue and Route 53. Therefore, the North Avenue sign is intended to be a supplement to other signage approved for the center.
- Past ACC Plan Commission actions – the four-foot high sign request has been requested (and denied) for other properties in the Village, most recently the CVS site at Grace Street & North Avenue (PC 06-16). The Village has been consistent in its consideration of ACC signage and has only granted such relief in very unique situations. Staff finds there is nothing unique with the subject property that would warrant additional relief for an ACC sign along North Avenue.

Freestanding Sign Along Route 53

The petitioner’s revised sign plan will be in compliance with the Village Code. It is essentially a smaller sign that that which is proposed along I-355, but without the ACC component.

Wall Signage Relief

The petitioner is seeking relief to allow for up to four wall signs to be placed along the Harlem Furniture west wall. They are seeking approval to allow for such signage of up to 275 square feet in area. The petitioner is requesting this relief to allow various future tenants the opportunity to have more visible signage along the west building elevation.

From staff’s perspective, the total square footage of all signage of 1,100 square feet would be significant and could present a billboard appearance. Staff notes that the adjacent freestanding sign is proposed to address site visibility issues – adding the wall sign component could constitute excessive signage for the center. While this signage is meant to be an additional identifier as to the activity that occurs in the center, staff finds that the wall signs are not reasonably located on the building. As such, staff does not support the wall sign relief.

Use Exception – Storage Center

The petitioner is seeking a use amendment within the planned development to allow for a storage center to be located on the subject property. If approved, it would allow for such an establishment to be located within part of or all of the vacant tenant space. At this point in time, the petitioner does not have a site plan or tenant space plan to accommodate such a tenant. The

intent of this request is to provide the opportunity to develop the site with such a use should such a tenant seek to locate on the property in the future.

The Zoning Ordinance lists storage centers as a permitted use within the I Limited Industrial District, and a conditional use within the B4 Corridor Commercial Shopping District, provided that such a use is located along a low volume arterial street. As the property is zoned B3, allowing such an activity would only be allowed by granting a use exception to the proposed amendment. Moreover, Section 155.508 (B)(3) of the Zoning Ordinance states:

“3. Proposed use exceptions shall not represent more than 40% of the site area or more than 40% of the total floor area, whichever is less. However, in a residential planned development area no more than 10% of the site area or the total floor area shall be devoted to commercial use; furthermore, no industrial use shall be permitted.”

In consideration of this request, the Village must also find that granting such an exception would not be within the public interest.

From staff’s perspective, granting a use exception for the subject property to allow for a storage center would not be appropriate for the following reasons:

- Inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan – a storage center use would be inconsistent with the plan as it is not compatible with the retail commercial nature of shopping centers or the retail uses within the center itself.
- Intent of planned development designation and other zoning approvals – the other zoning actions included within the petition are all intended to increase the visibility and prominence of the shopping center as a retail center. The landscape amendment is intended to thin the plantings to provide for better visibility of the center and the requested signage relief is intended to more closely identify the existing retail activities within the center. However, should the center ultimately be used for industrial uses, there would be no need for the other zoning actions.
- Industrial nature of the use - storage centers, as evidenced by their classification within the Zoning Ordinance, are more industrial than commercial in nature. The Zoning Ordinance sets forth prohibitions and limitations for industrial type uses in other non-industrial districts. While the storage center use may have a retail component to the use, staff finds that it is not in keeping with the types of land uses typically found within shopping centers in general. Moreover, uses in the B3 District are intended to serve the “shopping needs of the community”. Staff finds that the use is not a “shopping use” by nature and definition.

Given these considerations, staff does not believe that a use exception for a storage center within the proposed Northgate Shopping Center planned development would be consistent with the intent of the planned development or the Plan.

IDRC Staff Summation

The table provided below gives a summary of the requested zoning actions requested by the petitioner and the IDRC staff recommendation to each request. Staff supports the amended landscape plan and the signage relief for the I-355 sign, subject to conditions. Staff does not support any relief for the freestanding North Avenue sign, the wall signage or the use exception for the storage center.

Petitioner’s Requested Action	IDRC Recommendation
Amend the Approved Landscape Plan	Staff supports petitioner’s request
Conditional Use for a Planned Development	Staff supports petitioner’s request
I-355 Sign: Deviation for sign height, sign area and for the height deviation for an ACC sign	Staff supports petitioner’s request
North Av. Sign: Deviation for sign height, sign area and for the height deviation for an ACC sign	Staff does not support any of the requested deviations for the North Avenue sign
Route 53/Sidney sign: revised submittal (6/9/06) shows that no signage relief is needed	No action needed by Plan Commission/ Village Board
Wall signage deviations for the Harlem Furniture west wall	Staff does not support petitioner’s request
Use Exception for a Storage Center	Staff does not support petitioner’s request

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the Inter-Departmental Review Committee recommends that the Plan Commission make the following motion recommending **approval** of this petition, only in part, and subject to the conditions as outlined:

Based on the submitted petition and the testimony presented, the proposal does comply with the standards required by the Lombard Zoning and Sign Ordinances, only in part, and, therefore, I move that the Plan Commission accept the findings of the Inter-Departmental Review Report as the findings of the Plan Commission and that granting a planned development would be in the public interest, and therefore recommends to the Corporate Authorities **approval** of only the following actions associated with PC 06-18:

1. An amendment to an annexation agreement (Ordinance 3336) approving an alternate landscape plan.

2. A conditional use for a planned development, with the following deviations to the Lombard Sign Ordinance:
 - a. A deviation from Section 153.234 to allow one shopping center identification sign of 360 square feet in sign area (to be located along I-355), where a maximum of one-hundred fifty (150) square feet is permitted;
 - b. A deviation from Section 153.234 to allow for one free-standing sign of forty-five feet (45') in overall height (to be located along I-355), where a maximum of thirty-five feet (35') is permitted; and
 - c. A deviation from Section 153.210 (D) to allow for an increase of an electronic message board from two feet (2') to four feet (4') in height with a display screen greater than eighteen inches in height (for a sign to be located along I-355).

Furthermore, the Plan Commission recommends denial of all other zoning actions requested as part of this petition.

The relief recommended for approval above shall be subject to the following conditions:

1. The petitioner shall follow the approved alternate landscape plan prepared by Rolf C. Campbell & Associates, dated June 20, 2005; with annotations provided by the petitioner denoting the materials to be removed or replaced. Any deviations from the plan must be reviewed and approved by the Village Director of Community Development.
2. The proposed sign along I-355 shall be developed in accordance with the submitted sign plan prepared by Olympic Signs, dated June 9, 2006 and made a part of this petition.
3. The proposed automatic changeable copy sign element included within the free-standing sign along I-355 shall be of a monochrome LED design, shall only advertise business establishment located on the subject property and shall operate in compliance with the Lombard Sign Ordinance.
4. The petitioner shall apply for and receive a building permit for the proposed improvements. Said permit shall include and shall satisfactorily address those issues identified as part of the Inter-departmental review comments noted within the staff report.
5. Associated with the removal of the vegetation along Route 53, the petitioner shall repair and/or replace those segments of the adjacent sidewalk in disrepair located immediately south of the Sidney Avenue intersection within the Route 53 right-of-way.

Plan Commission
Re: PC 06-18
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Inter-Departmental Review Group Report Approved By:

David A. Hulseberg, AICP
Director of Community Development

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att
c. Petitioner

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