

**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

Date: February 3, 2020

CASE NUMBER

6309/5752

APPLICANT NAME

Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

LOCATION

7770 Airport Boulevard
(Northeast corner of Airport Boulevard and Schillinger
Road South)

VARIANCE REQUEST

SIGN: Sign Variance to allow increased signage for a business on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District.

**ZONING ORDINANCE
REQUIREMENT**

SIGN: The Zoning Ordinance allows one wall sign per street frontage for a business on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District.

ZONING

B-3, Community Business

AREA OF PROPERTY

0.61± Acre

**ENGINEERING
COMMENTS**

No comments.

**TRAFFIC ENGINEERING
COMMENTS**

This request was not reviewed by Traffic Engineering.

**CITY COUNCIL
DISTRICT**

District 7

ANALYSIS

The applicant is requesting a Sign Variance to allow increased signage for a business on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District; the Zoning Ordinance allows one wall sign per street frontage for a business on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District.

The site has been given a District Center (DC) land use designation per the adopted Future Land Use Plan and Map, adopted on May 18, 2017 by the Planning Commission. The Future Land Use Plan and Map complements and provides additional detail to the Development Framework Maps in the Map for Mobile, adopted by the Planning Commission at its November 5, 2015 meeting. This designation acknowledges existing commercial development that is spread along

Mobile's transportation corridors in a conventional strip pattern or concentrated into shorter segments of a corridor.

This designation applies across the city to larger areas of existing mixed-use character or where such character is encouraged. These areas will include moderate to high-density residential (minimum densities of 6 dwelling units per acre) in dynamic, horizontal or vertical mixed use environments, to provide a balance of housing and employment.

District Centers (DC) generally serve several surrounding neighborhoods and may even have a city-wide or region-wide reach. As such, they are often anchored by a major commercial or institutional employer such as a shopping mall or a medical center.

Depending on location and assigned zoning, residential areas in District Centers may incorporate a mix of housing types, ranging from mid-rise multifamily buildings containing apartments and lofts, to townhouses and detached single-family homes. Major civic cultural institutions and public spaces provide regional and neighborhood destinations.

District Centers should be designed to induce pedestrian activity, with high quality streetscapes connecting the different components of a center as well as the center to its surrounding area. DC districts may be served by transit and include development of an intensity and design that supports transit use.

It should be noted that the Future Land Use Plan and Map components of the Map for Mobile Plan are meant to serve as a general guide, not a detailed lot and district plan. In many cases the designation on the new Future Land Use Map may match the existing use of land, but in others the designated land use may differ from what is on the ground today. As such, the Future Land Use Plan and Map allows the Planning Commission and City Council to consider individual cases based on additional information such as the classification request, the surrounding development, the timing of the request, and the appropriateness and compatibility of the proposed use and, where applicable, the zoning classification.

The Zoning Ordinance states that no variance shall be granted where economics are the basis for the application; and, unless the Board is presented with sufficient evidence to find that the variance will not be contrary to the public interest, and that special conditions exist such that a literal enforcement of the Ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship. The Ordinance also states that a variance should not be approved unless the spirit and intent of the Ordinance is observed and substantial justice done to the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood.

Variances are not intended to be granted frequently. The applicant must clearly show the Board that the request is due to very unusual characteristics of the property and that it satisfies the variance standards. What constitutes unnecessary hardship and substantial justice is a matter to be determined from the facts and circumstances of each application.

The purpose of the Sign Regulation Provisions is to promote the economic well-being of the entire Mobile community by creating a favorable physical image, to afford the business

community an equal and fair opportunity to advertise and promote products and services, and to protect the right of the citizens to enjoy Mobile's natural scenic beauty.

The applicant states:

This sign variance request is in reference to the existing Verizon Wireless store located at the Northeast corner intersection of Airport Boulevard and Schillinger Road. The two-tenant building is located within the B-3 Community Business zoning district, with Verizon Wireless occupying the right (East side) of the building, and Fed-Ex Office occupying the left (West side) of the building as viewed from Airport Blvd., which faces the front entrance doors of both tenancies.

The existing Verizon store and signage which predates the site's annexation into the City of Mobile, currently has 3 existing wall signs and a sign panel on each side of the existing freestanding sign that is shared by the building's two tenants. The existing Verizon wall signs are located on the Front (South) Elevation facing Airport Blvd. (139.21 sq. ft.), on the Right Side (East) Elevation facing the access road to Lowe's (139.21 sq. ft.), and on the Rear (North) Elevation that faces McDonald's (70.11 sq. ft.), which amounts to a total of 348.53 sq. ft. of existing wall sign area.

The primary purpose of the sign variance request is to allow Verizon to replace their outdated existing signs with new signs that comply with the new logo brand guidelines, without having to forfeit 2 of the 3 existing wall signs which are now existing nonconforming signs due to the parcels annexation into the City of Mobile, and the associated change in the sign zoning regulations. We believe that all 3 wall signs were allowed as-of-right prior to the site's annexation and were compliant with the signage regulations then being enforced. The sign zoning regulations now being enforced allow each business in a multi-tenant building 1 wall sign per street frontage that it faces, so that Verizon is now allowed only 1 as-of-right wall sign on the Front (South) Elevation that faces Airport Boulevard.

Verizon is seeking permission to replace only 2 of the 3 existing wall signs, one on the Front (South) Elevation facing Airport Blvd. (66.34 sq. ft. proposed) which is permitted as-of-right, and is requesting a variance to allow a second wall sign on the Right Side (East) Elevation facing the access road to Lowe's (66.34 sq. ft. proposed), for a total proposed sign area of 132.68 sq. ft. In addition, Verizon wishes to replace the existing freestanding sign panels with new panels that comply with the new logo brand guidelines (39.79 sq. ft. proposed per side). Please note that the sign area for the 2 proposed wall signs (total of 132.68 sq. ft.) is 215.85 sq. ft. less than the sign area for the 3 existing wall signs (total of 348.53 sq. ft.) and represents a reduction of 62 percent in total wall sign area for the Verizon tenant space, as well as a reduction in the total number of wall signs from 3 existing down to 2 proposed.

The Right Side (East) Elevation wall sign is needed for numerous reasons expanded upon later in this narrative, but one of the primary challenges it overcomes is the unique site orientation of the building that renders the Front (South) Elevation wall

sign "invisible" to traffic traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard. As such, Verizon believes that the proposed Right Side (East) Elevation wall sign is critical to the continued success of their existing retail store and respectfully requests that a variance be granted to allow a second wall sign on the East Elevation for the following reasons:

A. Customer Visits per Year and Market Area Served

The number of times a customer visits a Verizon Wireless store per year is not typical in comparison to what many other types of retail establishments experience. Many Verizon Wireless customers visit a store only once or twice a year to upgrade their service, or to have a phone serviced or replaced with a newer model, or as little as once every two years when their contracts are up for renewal. In contrast, the number of times a customer may visit a supermarket, or a convenience store for example, may be several times a month.

In addition, Verizon Wireless stores serve a much larger retail market trade area than many other types of retail establishments. Since full-service Verizon Wireless "company stores" are widely dispersed, customers may be traveling much further to visit a Verizon Wireless store than to, for example, a fast food establishment, which typically draws customers from only the immediate surrounding area.

Exhibit sheet TA-1 labeled Trade Area (Pin-Dot) Analysis for Existing Mobile, AL Verizon Store indicates in-store customer activations (not including visits to have a phone serviced) for the previous 12-month period with each dot representing the customer's account address. As shown on the map, some customers are traveling to the store from upwards of twenty miles away, which was confirmed through personal communications with the store's General Manager, Lindsay Wiles, who stated that some customers are coming to the store from as far away as Lucedale, Hurley, and Moss Point Mississippi.

Exhibit sheet TA-2 labeled Travel Distances and Driving Times to Verizon Company Stores Surrounding the Mobile, AL (Schillinger) Store indicates the locations of all the Verizon Wireless "company stores" surrounding the Mobile, AL (Schillinger) store, and shows that these full-service stores are widely dispersed, and that customers may be coming from relatively long distances to visit the Mobile (Schillinger) store. For example, a customer located midway between the Mobile (Schillinger) store and Hattiesburg, MS stores would need to travel approximately 46 miles, with an average drive time of 55 minutes, to reach either of these two locations.

Given the large trade area and infrequent visits to the store, Verizon Wireless customers are more likely to be unfamiliar with the location of the Mobile (Schillinger) store and local vehicular traffic patterns, as the store may be located far away from where they typically live, work, or shop. Properly sized and positioned signage, therefore, plays a more important role in helping Verizon Wireless customers, especially those visiting the store for the first time, to negotiate their way

to the store, as compared with other retailer's whose customers visit their establishments more frequently, and which have a smaller trade area than Verizon.

B. Customer Complaints

During a visit to the Mobile (Schillinger) Verizon Wireless store by Gruskin Architecture + Design, P.C. personnel on September 27, 2019, a meeting with the store's General Manager, Lindsay Wiles, was conducted in order to determine if the store's customers had expressed any concerns regarding difficulty in finding their way to the store. The General Manager indicated that even with the existing signage she receives 2 -3 comments a week from customers indicating that they had difficulty finding the store and often hears comments about the building being hidden. In addition, customers complain that the store parking lot is difficult to access from Airport Boulevard and that some miss the turn into lot.

Most importantly, the General Manager stated that about 60% of all customers visiting the store approach it while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, and that customers depend in the existing side wall sign which faces oncoming traffic to figure out where the store is. Additionally, she expressed concern that if the side wall sign were removed, that the current wayfinding difficulties experienced by the store's customers would only get worse.

C. Analysis of Existing Signage

Since the majority of customers (approximately 60%) approach the Verizon Wireless store traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, and the sign variance request is for the Right Side (East) Elevation wall sign which faces oncoming traffic traveling in this direction, this analysis is limited to the existing freestanding and wall signage potentially visible while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard.

1) Existing Freestanding Sign

When traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, the position of the shared Verizon Wireless/FedEx Office freestanding sign on the property creates the impression that the entrance drive into the site is further down the road than it actually is. In reality, the sign is located approximately 140 feet past the turn into the site which increases the likelihood that a driver will miss the entrance to the Verizon Wireless site or make unsafe last-minute vehicle maneuvers in order to do so.

In addition, there are three very large freestanding signs located near the Eastern edge of the property located before the Verizon/FedEx freestanding sign (Lowe's, McDonald's, and a billboard) that compete with the Verizon sign panel for attention. Given that the Verizon sign panel is comparatively small (only 39.79 sq. ft.), it tends to get lost in the sea of much larger signs making it difficult for drivers to even detect the presence of the sign (please reference exhibits BC-2, **R-1**, and R-2).

2) Existing Front (South) Elevation Wall Sign

Since the Front (South) Elevation building wall and associated wall sign is not parallel with Airport Boulevard due to the orientation of the building on the site and is instead angled approximately 25 degrees away from vehicles traveling Westbound, the sign is totally invisible to oncoming traffic. The front elevation wall sign is only minimally detectable in a driver's peripheral vision, but only at a point where the customer is almost at the turn into the site, and therefore, provides no value in aiding drivers to access the site while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard (please reference exhibits BC-1, BC-2, R-1, R-2, and R-3).

3) Existing Right Side (East) Elevation Wall Sign

Of all the signs potentially visible to drivers traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, only the side elevation wall sign provides any real value in aiding drivers to access the Verizon Wireless site for the following reasons: The sign is positioned slightly before the entrance into the Verizon site and thereby marks the location of the drive aisle unlike the freestanding sign position discussed above. The side wall sign is critical, as it is the only visible clue to drivers that the store is actually located before the freestanding sign, helping them to comprehend that the Verizon driveway entrance is actually located before the freestanding sign and not further down the road. The sign is almost perpendicular to Airport Road which provides greater visibility and legibility rather than a sign that is parallel to the roadway which causes the letters to be foreshortened which decreases the sign's legibility. And lastly, the letters are large enough for the sign to be read far enough back on Airport Boulevard to give motorists enough time to detect the sign, understand it's message, and perform the necessary vehicular maneuvers to turn into the Verizon Parking Lot (please reference exhibits BC-1, BC-2, R-1, R-2, and R-3).

D. United States Sign Council Calculations

Since 1996 the United States Sign Council Foundation, in concert with traffic engineers, human factors researchers, and statistical analysts of the Pennsylvania Transportation Institute of the Pennsylvania State University, has published a series of research studies. The results from this work provides a basis for understanding the manner in which motorists receive and respond to the information content of a private roadside sign system. The overall result of the USSC studies was to quantify a legibility quotient for signs derived from the viewing distance to the sign, the speed of travel, the legibility index of the sign itself, the complexity of the driving and roadside environment, and various other factors. The research and corresponding analyses afford designers of signs with a methodology for determining the legibility, size, and placement characteristics necessary for effective roadside communication to occur.

In order for a sign to be effective in directing customers into the Verizon Wireless access drive while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, it must be sufficiently visible for customers to have enough time to: 1) detect the presence of the sign noting it as a separate entity in a field of roadside objects; 2) scan the sign's letters while focusing one's vision on the message the sign contains; 3) reorient one's self to the road by refocusing one's view to the road environment at frequent intervals; and 4) maneuver

the vehicle into the right lane in order to make a right turn into the Verizon Wireless parking lot. In accordance with the US Sign Council "Best Practice Standards for On-Premise Signs" calculation methodology, the permitted as-of-right freestanding sign panel and the proposed Wall Sign #1 located on the Front (South) Elevation were evaluated to determine their effectiveness in helping customers to make the turn into the Verizon Wireless parking lot as follows:

1) *Proposed Freestanding Sign Replacement Panel*

Since the face of the freestanding sign panel is located perpendicular to the drivers line of sight while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, the US Sign Council calculation methodology for "perpendicular signs" was utilized to evaluate the sign (please reference exhibit sheet SC-1). Based on a posted speed limit of 45 miles per hour, the Viewer Reaction Time (VRT) is calculated to be 8.68 seconds (viewer reaction time is the time it takes a driver to complete the 4 tasks described above). The corresponding Viewer Reaction Distance (VRD) is calculated to be 573 feet and represents the distance in lineal feet a vehicle will cover at a given rate of speed (in this case 45 mph) during the interval in which a driver sees and reacts to the sign. Using this calculation method, the minimum sign letter height required based on the legibility index of the proposed sign is determined to be 31 inches. Since the largest letter height that can be accommodated within the existing freestanding sign cabinet is only 14 3/4 inches (less than half the size that is required), the freestanding sign will not be effective in helping drivers safely maneuver into the Verizon parking lot. Put another way, the 14 3/4 inch letter height is not legible from 573 feet (VRD) before the turn into the Verizon parking lot to make it useful to drivers.

2) *Proposed Front (South) Elevation Wall Sign #1*

Since the face of proposed wall sign #1 is located somewhat parallel to Airport Boulevard, it is appropriate to utilize the US Sign Council guidelines for "parallel signs" to evaluate the sign (please reference exhibit sheet SC-1). As discussed in section C.2 above, the proposed front elevation wall sign is angled away from vehicles traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard, so that it is not a matter of providing sufficient letter height to make the sign effective for motorists attempting to access the site (as is the case for the freestanding sign), but is rather a function of being able to detect and read the sign at all.

As per the US Sign Council standards, parallel signs become legible only after the view angle from the motorist's position on the roadway to the sign exceeds 30 degrees from the face of the wall on which the sign is mounted. As depicted on sheet SC-1, proposed wall sign #1 only becomes legible at a point on Airport Boulevard between 64 and 72 feet (depending on the position of the vehicle in the left or right lane) before the turn at the access drive into the Verizon parking lot. Since a vehicle traveling at 45 miles per hour covers 66 feet per second, this would allow a motorist approximately 1 second to detect the sign, read its message, and maneuver into the right lane in order to make the turn into the Verizon site. A viewer reaction time of approximately 1 second is far less than the required 8.68 seconds calculated for a

vehicle traveling at 45 miles per hour, so that wall sign #1 serves no useful purpose in aiding drivers to access the site while traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard.

E) Character of the B-3 Community Business Zoning District

The existing Verizon Wireless store is located at the visual center of the B-3 Community Business zoning district at the intersection of Airport Boulevard and Schillinger Road, the primary vehicular routes traversing the district. The properties which comprise the district contain an eclectic mix of uses such as various types of retail and service business establishments including restaurants, banks, a car dealership, and several big-box retailers, each with their own signage. The granting of a variance for the second wall sign proposed to be located on the Right Side (East) Elevation of the Verizon tenant space will not degrade the visual environment or have an undue adverse effect on the aesthetics of the area because the store is located within a well-established business district containing a variety of existing signage. The proposed second Verizon wall sign fits within the context of the immediate and surrounding area; will not alter the essential character of the zone in which the property is located; is not inconsistent with signage already existing in the area; and will not affect the existing look and feel of the neighborhood

F) Building Orientation and Lowes Access Drive

As previously discussed above, the Verizon/FedEx building is not oriented on the site with its front elevation parallel with Airport Boulevard, but is instead rotated clockwise approximately 25 degrees so that the front elevation and associated wall sign is angled away from oncoming traffic traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard. The 4 neighboring properties located just to the East of the Verizon store along Airport Boulevard include from closest to furthest away, Pepboys, Arby's, Easy Money, and Taco Bell, all of which share the same 25-degree rotated relationship to Airport Boulevard. What makes the Verizon/FedEx property different from the neighboring properties is that the 4 neighboring properties all contain single tenant buildings, which entitles them to have as-of-right side wall signs facing the oncoming traffic traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard. Three of these business establishments have utilized the additional signage afforded them by the sign ordinance and have placed signs on their right side elevations facing oncoming traffic, except Arby's whose right side elevation is hidden behind Easy Money, which would block any sign installed on the side elevation. Only Verizon Wireless is not permitted to have an additional as-of-right sign on the right side (East) elevation because they are a tenant in a building containing multiple businesses.

The Lowe's property contains 3 main access drives, one from Schillinger Road, one from Alverson Road, and the third from Airport Boulevard which is adjacent to and runs along the East side of the Verizon property. Large freestanding signs for Lowe's and McDonald's identify this roadway as a main entry point to these businesses. An entry point to the rear and/or side of the Pepboys, Arby's, Easy Money, and O'Reilly Auto Parts properties is also provided from the highly utilized Lowe's access drive, as

well as the Verizon/FedEx property, which has East side access directly from the Lowe's drive which is essentially used like a public street. Even though the Lowe's access road is private and not an official Public right-of-way which would allow Verizon an as-of-right wall sign on the right side (East) elevation, the Lowe's drive functions as a public way since it serves numerous properties, and is used by the public for vehicular access to all of the properties discussed above.

Because the Lowe's main access drive functions and looks like a public way, allowing Verizon to install a new Right Side (East) Elevation wall sign facing the Lowes drive would fit into the overall appearance and character of the district, and not stand out as a visual oddity. Also, without wall signs on the rear (North) elevation and right side (East) elevation, Verizon would lack any signage exposure to the Lowe's access drive and expansive parking lot located to the North of the Verizon site. Lastly, motorists traveling South along the Lowe's access drive would have no visual clues as to the location of the Verizon store, and the existing Verizon access drive located directly off of the main Lowe's drive would be rendered irrelevant (please reference exhibits BC-1, BC-2, and R-4).

G. Traffic Safety

The installation of the proposed Right Side (East) Elevation wall sign will not cause any unsafe traffic conditions or impair the visibility of motorists traveling on the roadways surrounding the site, and will help to maintain the positive effect on traffic safety provided by the existing side wall sign. The existing, and the proposed side wall sign improves traffic safety by allowing motorists traveling Westbound on Airport Boulevard to more accurately identify the location of the Verizon store well in advance of the right turn required to access the parking lot, helping to mitigate the incidence of sudden braking or aggressive maneuvering, that may increase without the benefit of the side wall sign. Without the wall sign on the East elevation, customers will be more likely to miss the parking lot entrance, pass the store, and have to perform a U-turn or other unsafe traffic maneuvers when they realize that they have passed the store, and have to retrace their steps.

H. Other Businesses Sign Variance Examples in B-3 Community Business Zoning District

On September 27, 2019 Gruskin Architecture + Design, P.C. personnel conducted site observations of other business establishments within the B-3 Community Business Zoning District in close proximity to the Verizon Wireless store to observe the general disposition of signage in the neighborhood. Although many businesses had wall signs which did not face a public right-of-way, most were located on single tenant buildings, which the Zoning Ordinance allows as-of-right. However, upon closer examination it was determined that four business establishments located in multi-tenant buildings had wall signs which did not face a public road Requests for public records for these businesses were submitted and a review of the information received revealed that 3 of the 4 businesses had received variances for the signs that do not face a public right-of-way. Close examination of these documents show that these businesses share many of the same site characteristics and hardships currently

experienced by Verizon Wireless. A brief summary of the variances granted for these establishments is as follows (please also reference exhibit sheet NS-1).

1) AT&T (located approximately 1/2 mile South of Verizon on Schillinger Rd.)

The AT&T tenant space has 2 wall signs (1 permitted as-of-right because the sign faces a public right-of way, and 1 facing the parking lot for the strip center for which a variance was granted).

The Zoning Board variance resolution stated "1) Approving the variance request will not be contrary to the public interest because the proposed signage, which is essentially the same size as the signage it is replacing, will allow customers to accurately determine the location of the business. 2) Special conditions exist, including the location of the business in a corner unit, the high speed of traffic along Schillinger Road, and the corporate rebranding requirements, such that a literal enforcement of the provisions of the chapter will result in unnecessary hardship; and, 3) That the spirit of the chapter shall be observed and substantial justice done to the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood by granting the variance due to the fact that the proposed signage will be of similar size and location as the signage it is replacing."

2) Chipotle (located directly across Airport Blvd. from Verizon)

The Chipotle tenant space has 3 wall signs (2 permitted as-of-right because two facades face a public right-of-way, and 1 facing a large shopping center parking field for which a variance was granted).

The staff report indicated "In such a scenario, there exists a possibility that tenant's in the outbuilding may not have any signage exposure to the parking lot expanse and, therefore, no recognition from the interior of the site. The Board has been sympathetic in similar situations to increased signage allowances for out buildings backing to expansive parking lots and the Planning Commission approved increased signage allowances for similar situations via the Planned Unit Development for the McGowin Park Development. The applicant has illustrated that a literal interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance would result in an undue hardship with relation to recognition at the subject site and the Board should consider this request for three wall signs for approval.

3) Aspen Dental (located in same building as Chipotle directly across Airport Blvd. from Verizon)

The Aspen Dental tenant space has 2 wall signs (1 permitted as-of-right because the sign faces a public right-of-way, and 1 facing a large shopping center parking field for which a variance was granted).

The staff report and Zoning Board variance resolution stated the same reasons for the granting of the variance for Chipotle

4) *Starbucks (located approximately 1000 feet South of Verizon on Schillinger Rd.) The Starbucks tenant space has 2 wall signs (1 permitted as-of-right because the sign faces a public right-of-way, and 1 facing a gas station adjacent to the property for which a sign permit was granted).*

The records received from the City of Mobile contained only sign permits for the Starbucks signage suggesting that both signs were permitted as-of-right. It could not be determined whether a variance was granted for the side wall sign facing the gas station, however, based on the April 29, 2015 sign permit date and the current Sign Ordinance, it appears that a variance should have been required for the side (South) elevation wall sign.

Closing Statement

Verizon believes that the request for a variance to allow a second wall sign on the Right Side (East) Elevation of their tenant space is justified by the reasons outlined above; that the granting of a variance for this sign will not be contrary to protecting the public health, safety, and welfare of the community; that the proposed wall sign is critical to the continued success of their existing retail store, and respectfully requests that a variance be granted to allow a second wall sign on the East Elevation.

The subject site was annexed into the City in 2007 and is surrounded by B-3 commercial uses. The site consists of a two-tenant building with a Fed-Ex store in the adjoining unit. The existing Verizon signage was in place upon annexation and consists of one sign on the front (South) wall, one on the side (East) wall, and one on the rear (North) wall. As the signage is the same as was in place upon annexation, it is considered legal nonconforming and may remain. However, only refacing with same size/same place faces is allowed. Any new signage will require the wall signage to meet the current allowance of one wall sign per tenant. However, as the site is at a public street corner, the end-cap unit toward the street corner (Fed-Ex) may have one wall sign facing each public street. Verizon is re-branding its signage which requires totally new signs to be installed; therefore, signage compliance is required, meaning only one wall sign is allowed for Verizon. The applicant proposes to have two wall signs for Verizon; hence this application.

It should be noted that the existing tenant panels in the pylon sign structure near the street intersection will be replaced simply by refacing with the new image.

The existing front and side wall signs must be removed for the re-imaging and are proposed to be replaced by the new signage package consisting of two wall signs with one on the front and one on the side of the building. The existing third wall sign on the rear wall will be removed and is not proposed to be replaced. The existing front and side wall signs of approximately 139 square feet each are proposed to be replaced with signs of approximately 66 square feet each.

The subject site is located not only at the public street intersection of Airport Boulevard and Schillinger Road South on its West side, but also on its East side by a private drive which accesses the Lowe's store to the rear, as well as several other businesses facing Airport

Boulevard and Schillinger Road South. Due to the building's orientation on the site, the front wall is not parallel to Airport Boulevard, but rather, it sits approximately 25 degrees to the right of parallel. Traffic approaching the site from the East along Airport Boulevard cannot see the front wall sign until almost directly in front of the building. To compound the visibility issue, there are two pylon sign support structures and one billboard sign support structure directly in the line of site when heading West which obscure the front wall sign from an angle. The existing wall sign on the East wall is much more visible when traveling to the West.

The applicant has demonstrated that a hardship may be imposed by a literal interpretation of the Zoning Ordinance, and the Board should consider this application for approval, subject to conditions.

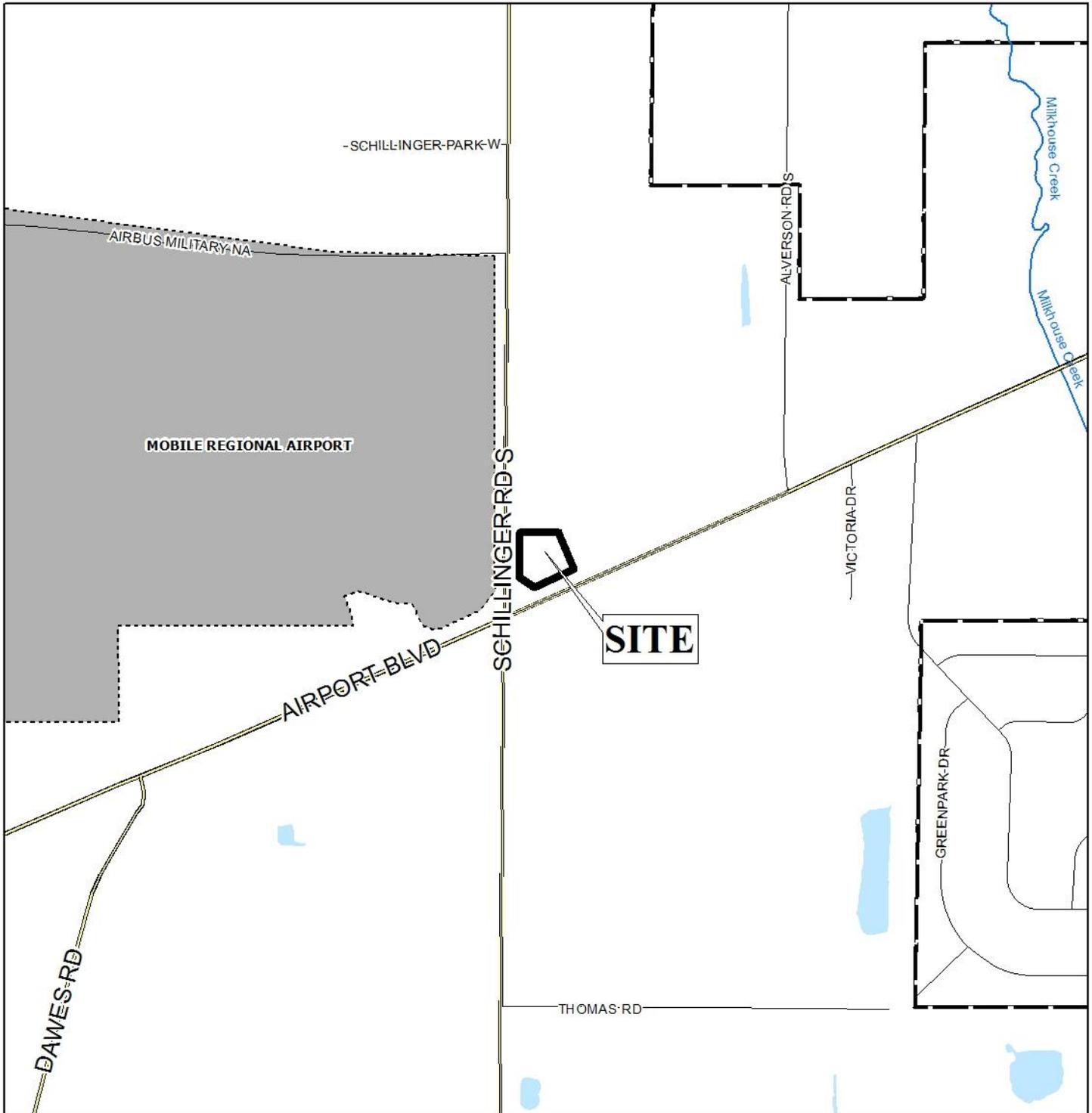
RECOMMENDATION: Based upon the preceding, Staff recommends to the Board the following findings of fact for approval of a Sign Variance to allow increased signage for a business on a multi-tenant site in a B-3, Community Business District:

- 1) Approving the variance request will not be contrary to the public interest due to the fact that it will allow a fair opportunity for location identification;
- 2) Special conditions appear to exist, primarily the positioning of the building on the site, such that a literal enforcement of the provisions of the chapter will result in unnecessary hardship; and
- 3) That the spirit of the chapter shall be observed and substantial justice done to the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood by granting the variance in that it will allow a business public street visibility which would ordinarily not be possible under existing conditions.

The approval is subject to the following conditions:

- 1) limitation of the signs to the sizes as submitted in the application;
- 2) the obtaining of the proper sign permits for the signs; and
- 3) full compliance with all municipal codes and ordinances.

LOCATOR MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 6309 DATE February 3, 2020

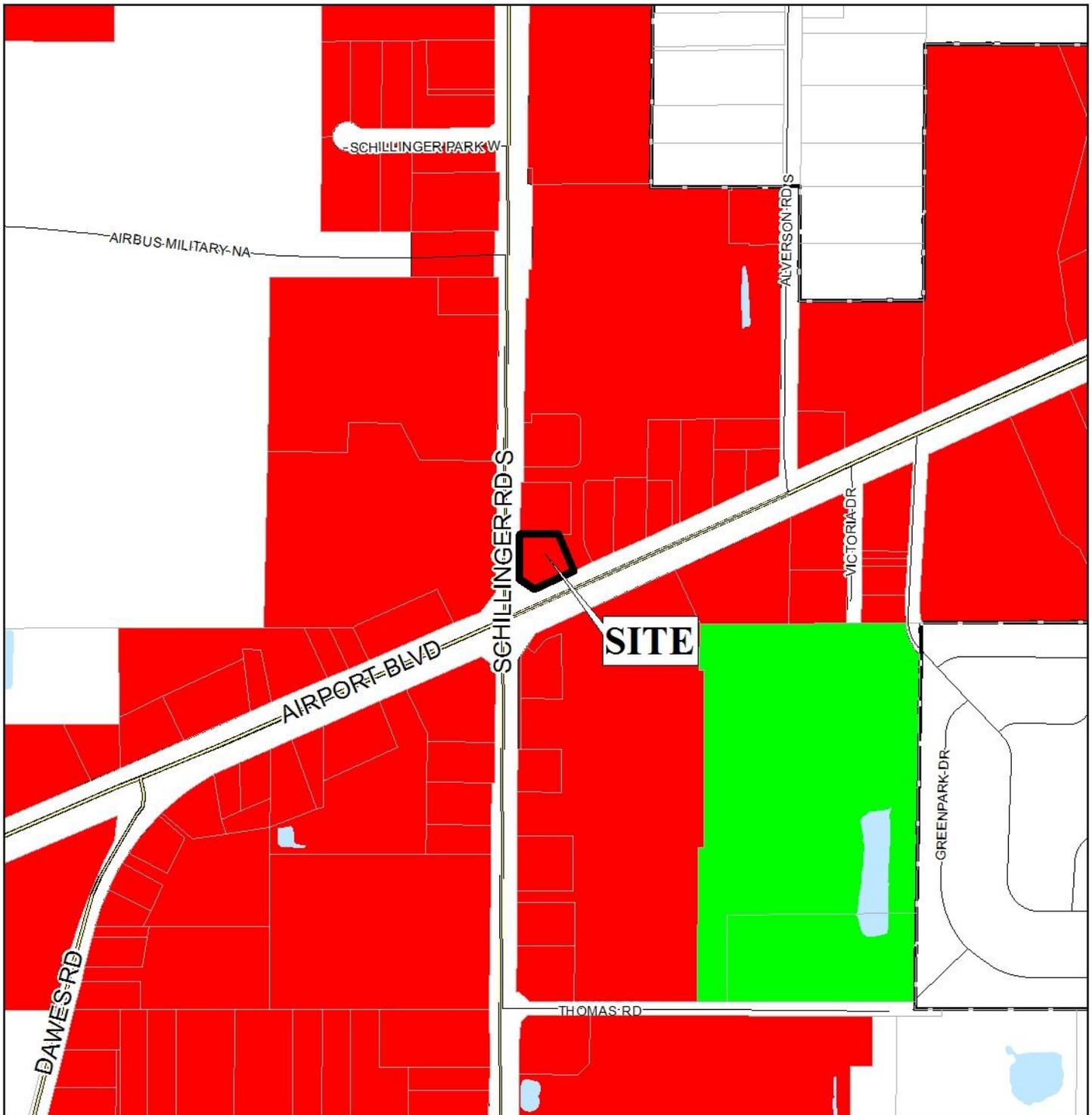
APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

REQUEST Sign Variance



NTS

LOCATOR ZONING MAP



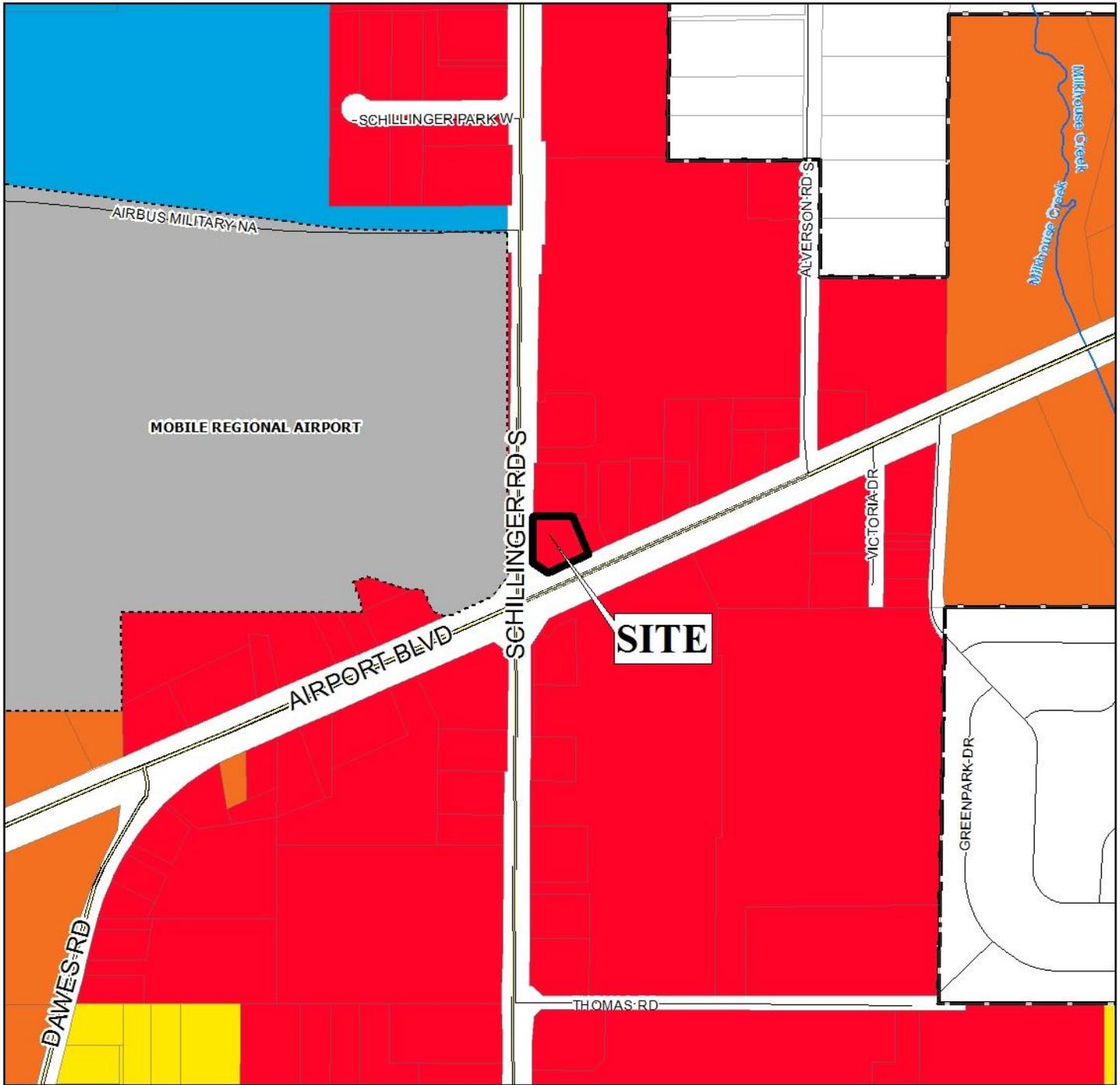
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APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

REQUEST Sign Variance



FLUM LOCATOR MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER 6309 DATE February 3, 2020

APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

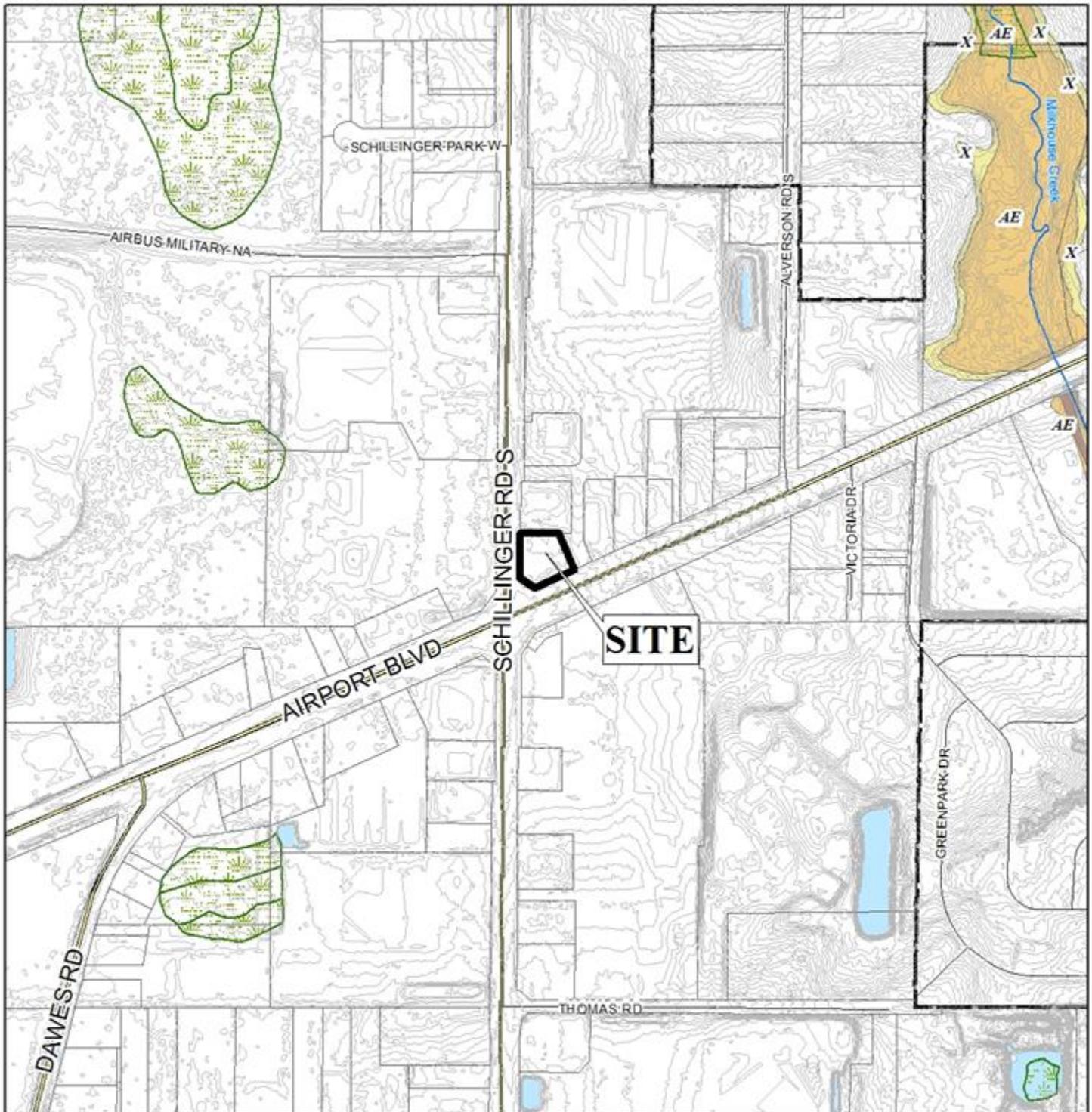
REQUEST Sign Variance

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Low Density Residential | Neighborhood Center - Traditional | Downtown Waterfront | Parks & Open Space |
| Mixed Density Residential | Neighborhood Center - Suburban | Light Industry | Water Dependent |
| Downtown | Traditional Corridor | Heavy Industry | |
| District Center | Mixed Commercial Corridor | Institutional | |



NTS

ENVIRONMENTAL LOCATOR MAP



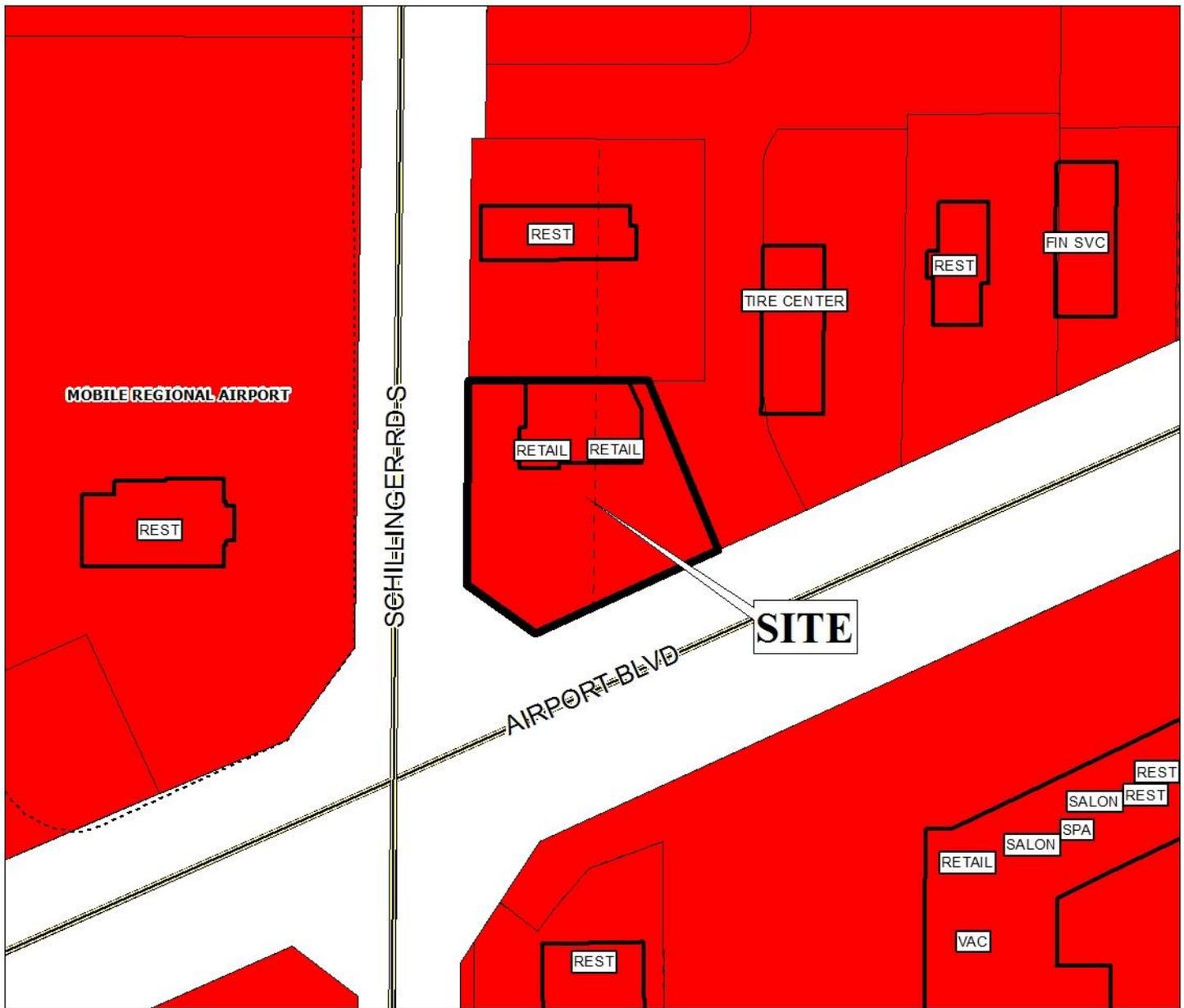
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REQUEST Sign Variance



BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

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APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

REQUEST Sign Variance

 R-A	 R-3	 T-B	 B-2	 B-5	 MUN	 SD-WH	 T5.1
 R-1	 R-B	 B-1	 B-3	 I-1	 OPEN	 T3	 T5.2
 R-2	 H-B	 LB-2	 B-4	 I-2	 SD	 T4	 T6



NTS

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VICINITY MAP - EXISTING AERIAL



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

APPLICATION NUMBER 6309 DATE February 3, 2020

APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

REQUEST Sign Variance



DETAIL SITE PLAN



**FRONT (SOUTH) ELEVATION
WITH EXISTING WALL SIGN #1**

1

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

EXISTING / PROPOSED WALL SIGN #1 - ZONING ANALYSIS

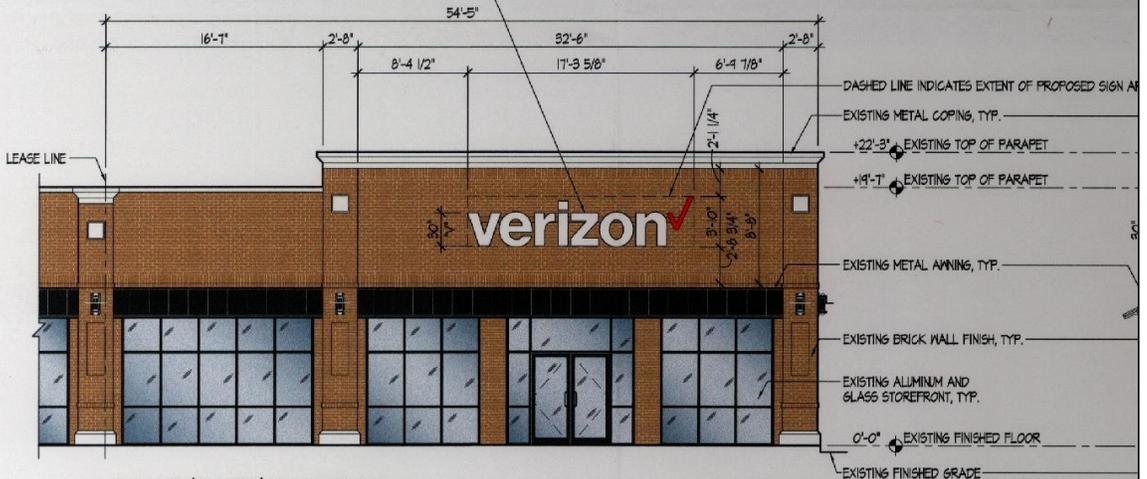
ZONE: (B-3) COMMUNITY BUSINESS

ITEM	ALLOWABLE	EXISTING	PROPOSED	VARIANCE REQUIRED
MAXIMUM QUANTITY OF WALL SIGNS	1	1	1	NO
MAXIMUM WALL SIGN SIZE (AREA)	3313 SQ. FT. (SEE NOTE 1)	134.21 SQ. FT.	66.34 SQ. FT.	NO
TYPE OF SIGN ILLUMINATION	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	NO

NOTES: (1) AS PER THE CITY OF MOBILE, ALABAMA ZONING ORDINANCE, SECTION 64-11.0.c.(3)(a), "EACH TENANT SHALL BE ALLOWED ONE (1) WALL SIGN PER STREET FRONTAGE THAT IT FACES NOT TO EXCEED THIRTY (30) PERCENT OF USABLE WALL AREA NOT TO EXCEED THREE HUNDRED FIFTY (350) SQUARE FEET." $1124.5 \text{ SQ. FT. (USABLE WALL AREA)} \times .30 = 337.35 \text{ SQ. FT.}$ SINCE $337.35 \text{ SQ. FT.} < 350.0 \text{ SQ. FT.}$, THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE WALL SIGN AREA = 337.35 SQ. FT.

PROPOSED WALL SIGN #1

PROPOSED 2" DEEP, INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED, RACEMAY MOUNTED CHANNEL LETTERS. LETTERS SHALL HAVE TRANSLUCENT WHITE FACES WITH OPAQUE WHITE RETURNS, EXCEPT 'CHECK MARK' SHALL HAVE TRANSLUCENT RED FACE WITH OPAQUE RED RETURNS. SIGN SHALL HAVE 30" HIGH LETTER 'V'.
PROPOSED SIGN AREA: 66.34 SQ. FT.



**FRONT (SOUTH) ELEVATION
WITH PROPOSED WALL SIGN #1**

4

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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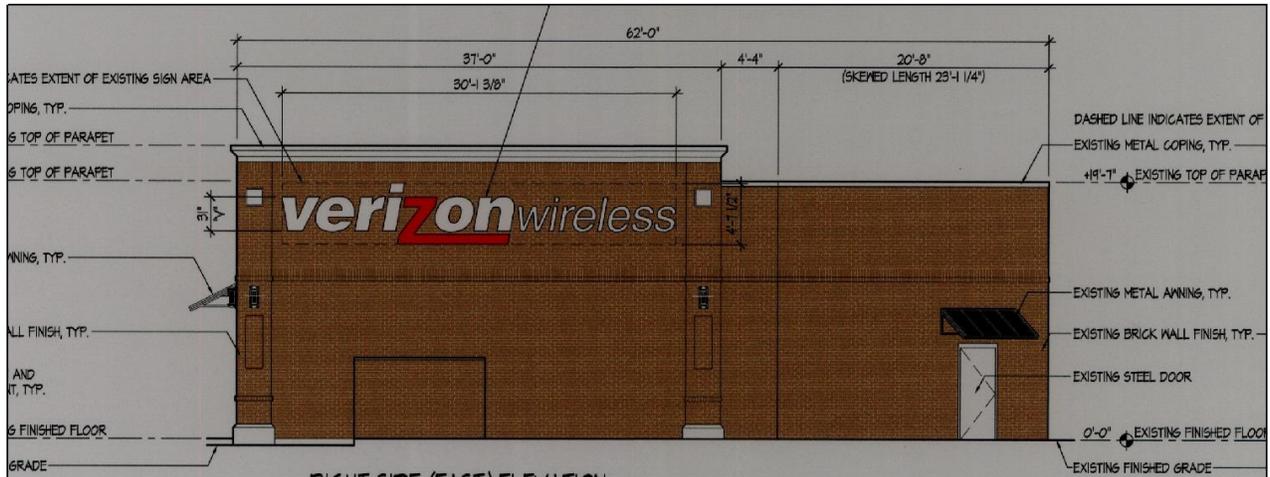
APPLICANT Gruskin Architecture & Design, P.C.

REQUEST Sign Variance



NTS

DETAIL SITE PLAN



2
 RIGHT SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION
 WITH EXISTING WALL SIGN #2
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

EXISTING / PROPOSED WALL SIGN #2 - ZONING ANALYSIS

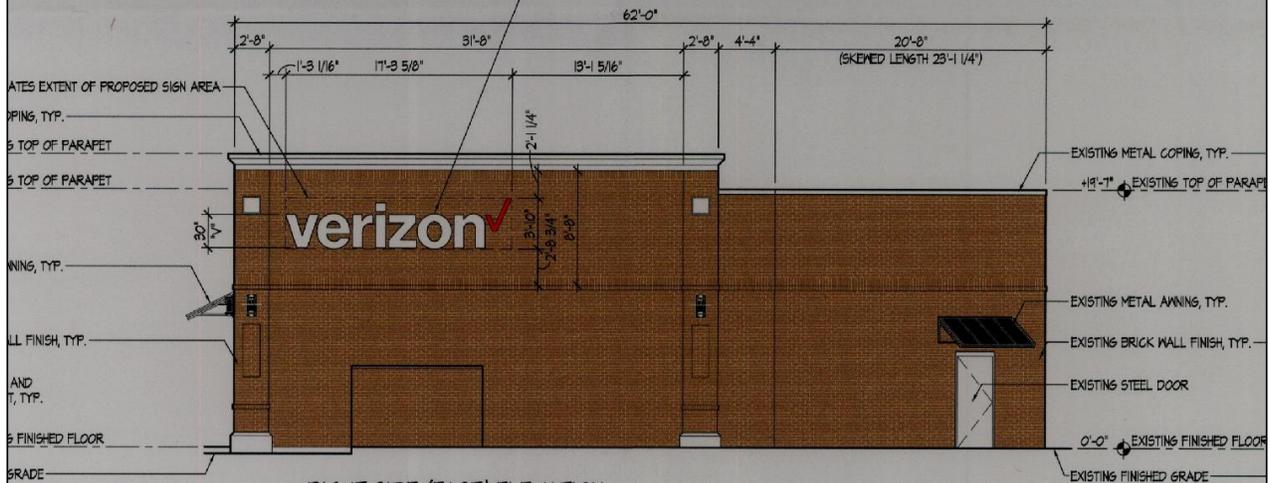
ZONE: (B-3) COMMUNITY BUSINESS

ITEM	ALLOWABLE	EXISTING	PROPOSED	VARIANCE REQUIRED
MAXIMUM QUANTITY OF WALL SIGNS	0	1	1	YES (SEE NOTE 2.)
MAXIMUM WALL SIGN SIZE (AREA)	350.0 SQ. FT. (SEE NOTE 1.)	134.21 SQ. FT.	66.34 SQ. FT.	NO
TYPE OF SIGN ILLUMINATION	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	NO

NOTES: (1) THE MAXIMUM WALL SIGN SIZE CALCULATION IS PROVIDED TO DEMONSTRATE THE MAXIMUM AREA ALLOWED UNDER THE CURRENT SIGN REGULATIONS IF THE RIGHT SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION WERE A SIGNABLE FACADE FACING STREET FRONTAGE. AS PER THE CITY OF MOBILE, ALABAMA ZONING ORDINANCE, SECTION 64-11.0.3(b)(2), "EACH TENANT SHALL BE ALLOWED ONE (1) WALL SIGN PER STREET FRONTAGE THAT IT FACES NOT TO EXCEED THIRTY (30) PERCENT OF USABLE WALL AREA NOT TO EXCEED THREE HUNDRED FIFTY (350) SQUARE FEET." (USABLE WALL AREA) X .30 = 401.8 SQ. FT. SINCE 401.8 SQ. FT. > 350.0 SQ. FT., THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE WALL SIGN AREA = 350.0 SQ. FT.
 (2) A VARIANCE IS REQUIRED FROM THE CITY OF MOBILE, ALABAMA ZONING ORDINANCE SECTION 64-11.0.3(b)(2) TO ALLOW A WALL SIGN ON A BUILDING ELEVATION WHICH DOES NOT FACE STREET FRONTAGE.

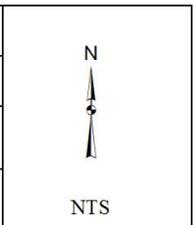
PROPOSED WALL SIGN #2

PROPOSED 2" DEEP, INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED, RACEWAY MOUNTED CHANNEL LETTERS. LETTERS SHALL HAVE TRANSLUCENT WHITE FACES WITH OPAQUE WHITE RETURNS, EXCEPT "CHECK MARK" SHALL HAVE TRANSLUCENT RED FACE WITH OPAQUE RED RETURNS. SIGN SHALL HAVE 30" HIGH LETTER "V".
 PROPOSED SIGN AREA: 66.34 SQ. FT.

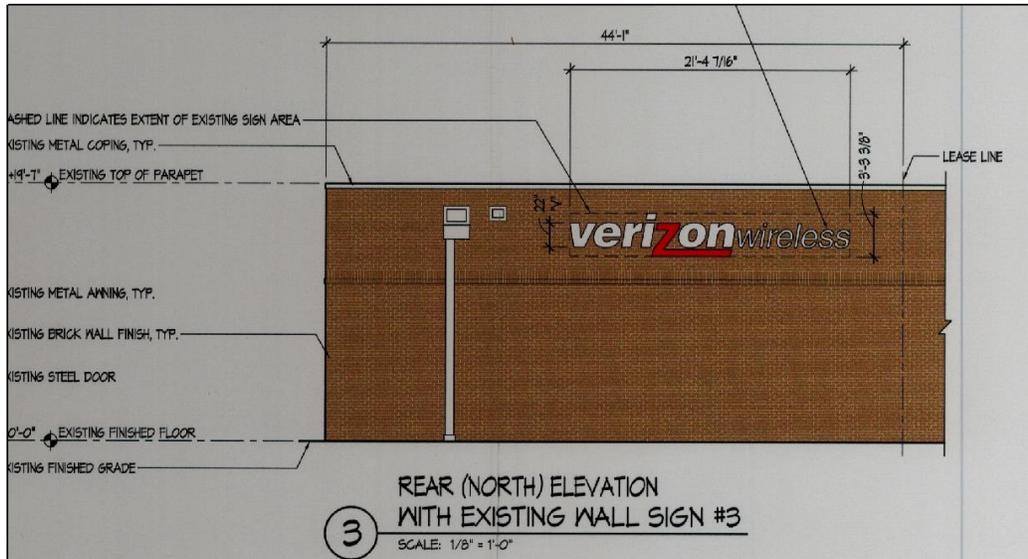


5
 RIGHT SIDE (EAST) ELEVATION
 WITH PROPOSED WALL SIGN #2
 SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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DETAIL SITE PLAN

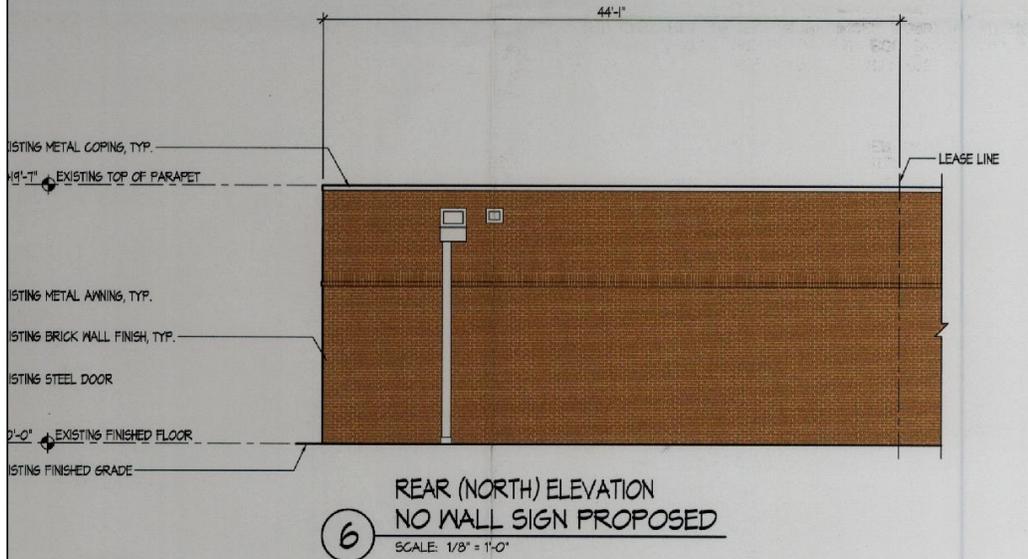


EXISTING / PROPOSED WALL SIGN #3 - ZONING ANALYSIS

ZONE: (B-3) COMMUNITY BUSINESS

ITEM	ALLOWABLE	EXISTING	PROPOSED	VARIANCE REQUIRED
MAXIMUM QUANTITY OF WALL SIGNS	0	1	NONE	NOT APPLICABLE
MAXIMUM WALL SIGN SIZE (AREA)	258.9 SQ. FT. (SEE NOTE 1)	1011 SQ. FT.	0.00 SQ. FT.	NOT APPLICABLE
TYPE OF SIGN ILLUMINATION	INTERNAL	INTERNAL	NOT APPLICABLE	NOT APPLICABLE

NOTES: (1) THE MAXIMUM WALL SIGN SIZE CALCULATION IS PROVIDED TO DEMONSTRATE THE MAXIMUM SIGN AREA ALLOWED UNDER THE CURRENT SIGN REGULATIONS IF THE REAR (NORTH) ELEVATION WERE A SIGNABLE FACADE FACING STREET FRONTAGE. AS PER THE CITY OF MOBILE, ALABAMA ZONING ORDINANCE, SECTION 64-11.8.c.(3)(g), EACH TENANT SHALL BE ALLOWED ONE (1) WALL SIGN PER STREET FRONTAGE THAT IT FACES NOT TO EXCEED THIRTY (30) PERCENT OF USABLE WALL AREA NOT TO EXCEED THREE HUNDRED FIFTY (350) SQUARE FEET * 863.2 SQ. FT. (USABLE WALL AREA) X .30 = 258.9 SQ. FT.; SINCE 258.9 SQ. FT. < 350.0 SQ. FT., THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE WALL SIGN AREA = 258.9 SQ. FT.



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DETAIL SITE PLAN

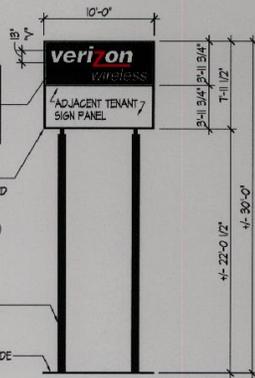
EXISTING FREESTANDING SIGN PANEL TO BE REMOVED

EXISTING "VERIZON WIRELESS" SIGN PANEL HAS TRANSLUCENT WHITE LETTERS EXCEPT LETTER "Z" WHICH IS TRANSLUCENT RED AND AN OPAQUE BLACK BACKGROUND. SIGN HAS 13" HIGH LETTER "Y".
EXISTING SIGN PANEL AREA: 39.79 SQ. FT.

EXISTING TWO SIDED, INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED METAL SIGN CABINET. (EXISTING SIGN AREA: 79.50 SQ. FT. PER SIDE)

EXISTING STEEL PYLON SUPPORT COLUMN, TYP.

EXISTING FINISHED GRADE



7 FREESTANDING SIGN WITH EXISTING SIGN PANEL
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

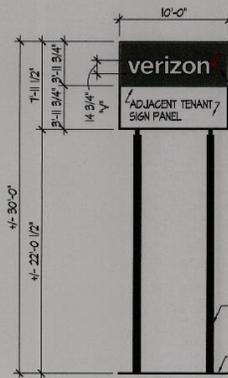
PROPOSED FREESTANDING SIGN REPLACEMENT PANEL

PROPOSED "VERIZON" SIGN PANEL SHALL BE TRANSLUCENT WHITE MATTE FILM WITH OPAQUE COOL GRAY 10 FILM AND TRANSLUCENT OPS RED FILM. LETTERS SHALL BE WHITE AND "CHECK MARK" SHALL BE RED. SIGN SHALL HAVE 14 3/4" HIGH LETTER "Y".
PROPOSED SIGN PANEL AREA: 39.79 SQ. FT.

EXISTING TWO SIDED, INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED METAL SIGN CABINET. (EXISTING SIGN AREA: 79.50 SQ. FT. PER SIDE)

EXISTING STEEL PYLON SUPPORT COLUMN, TYP.

EXISTING FINISHED GRADE



8 FREESTANDING SIGN WITH PROPOSED SIGN PANEL
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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