



## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

*Planning Division*

### m e m o r a n d u m

**TO:** The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals

**FROM:** Maximillian Mahalek, Planning Intern

**DATE:** May 15, 2015

**SUBJECT:** **ZBA Case No. 2015-MAJ-06:** A request by the Urbana Park District to construct a monument sign that will be two feet taller than the maximum allowable height of six feet in the CRE District at 505 W. Stoughton Street. This represents a 33.3% variance from the maximum allowable height.

**ZBA Case No. 2015-MIN-01:** A request by the Urbana Park District to construct a monument sign that will encroach two feet into the required eight-foot setback in the CRE District at 505 W. Stoughton Street. This represents a 25% variance from the required setback.

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#### **Introduction & Background**

The Urbana Park District has filed a request to construct a monument sign along W. Springfield Avenue at the Phillips Recreation Center (505 W. Stoughton Street). The sign will have a double-sided electronic message board, and will be utilized to promote the Urbana Park District's events and programs. It will also replace an existing sign found at the Phillips Recreation Center along W. Springfield Avenue.

The subject property is located in the CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education zoning district. Per Table IX-1 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, monument signs in the CRE district shall be set back a minimum of eight feet from the public right-of-way. The proposed sign will be setback six feet from the public right-of-way along W. Springfield Avenue, representing a 25% variance from the established regulation. According to Section XI-3.C.2(b)(1) of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the proposed sign's setback will require a Minor Variance. Also, per Table IX-1, monument signs in the CRE district are limited to a height of six feet. The proposed sign will be eight feet tall, representing a 33.3% variance from the established regulation. According to Section XI-3.C.2(b)(9), the proposed sign's height will require a Major Variance.

Pursuant to Section XI-3 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, Minor Variances may be approved a majority vote of the Zoning Board of Appeal's members. In order for a Major Variance to be approved, the Zoning Board of Appeals must recommend approval by a two-thirds majority and forward the case to the City Council for final review and approval.

## **Description of the Site and Surrounding Area**

The Phillips Recreation Center is located at 505 W. Stoughton Street. The site is 70,096 square feet in area. The recreation center itself, which is roughly 9,981 square feet in area, provides office space for the Urbana Park District. It also provides space for indoor programming, including fitness and dance class, as well as theater rehearsals. The site also consists of a playground, a basketball court with two baskets, and a parking lot with 43 spaces (including two handicapped parking spaces).

There is currently a monument sign that is located on the south side of the Phillips Recreation Center along W. Springfield Avenue. This sign is double-sided and internally illuminated. The current sign is setback only four feet from the public right-of-way along W. Springfield Avenue, which is four feet less than the required setback of eight feet. The sign structure is six feet-11 inches tall, which is almost one foot higher than the maximum allowable height of six feet for monument signs in the CRE district. The existing sign face has an area of 34 square feet. Per Table IX-1 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, the existing sign would be allowed to have an area of 50 square feet, if the recreation center's frontages along N. McCullough Street and W. Springfield Avenue are combined. Measurements of sign height are done from grade level, while the area of the sign refers just to the face of the sign.

As a part of the request by the Urbana Park District, this double-sided sign would be demolished and replaced with the new proposed sign.

There is a separate monument sign fronting the facility's entrance along W. Stoughton Street. This sign is setback an average of 2.1 feet from the angled property line along W. Stoughton Street. This sign structure is four feet tall, and the sign face has an area of 30 square feet. The area of this sign face is under the maximum allowable area of 32 square feet. This sign is single-sided and externally illuminated by lights located at grade-level.

*Space Skipped Intentionally*

**Zoning and Land-Use**

The site itself is zoned CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education. The following is a summary of the surrounding zoning and land-uses for the subject site:

<b>Location</b>	<b>Zoning</b>	<b>Existing Land-Use</b>	<b>Comprehensive Plan Future Land-Use</b>
<b>Subject Property</b>	CRE, Conservation-Recreation-Education District	Urbana Park District’s Phillips Recreation Center	Campus Mixed use
<b>North</b>	R-4, Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential	Single and Multi-Family Residences	Residential
<b>South</b>	B-2, Neighborhood Business- Arterial District, R2, Single-Family Residential District, and MOR, Mixed-Office Residential District	Offices, Single and Multi-Family Residences	Campus Mixed-Use
<b>East</b>	B-2, Neighborhood Business- Arterial District	Multi-Family Residences (1 of which is vacant)	Campus Mixed-Use
<b>West</b>	R-5, Medium High Density Multiple-Family Residential District	Single and Multi-Family Residences (1 of which is under construction)	Campus Mixed-Use

**Background**

On November 6, 2014, the Urbana Plan Commission approved an amendment to Section IX-4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance allowing freestanding and wall signs with electronic displays in the CRE district, in addition to the previously allowed B-3, General Business District. On November 17, 2014, the Urbana City Council approved this modification (Ordinance No. 2014-11-106). Per this amendment, all requirements for electronic signs established in the Urbana Zoning Ordinance would also apply in the CRE district. These regulations include the following:

1. *Area.* The maximum area of electronic display shall not exceed 50 percent of any sign area.
2. *Animation.* Electronic displays shall not be animated as defined by this article, including a display change frequency of no more than once every three minutes.
3. *Illumination:*
  - a. Electronic display signs shall be equipped with automatic dimming technology

which adjusts the sign's illumination level based on ambient light conditions.

- b. The maximum illumination level of an electronic display shall be 0.3 foot candles above ambient light levels.

All requirements required listed in Table IX-1 for freestanding signs in the CRE district also apply to the proposed sign.

## **Discussion**

### **Sign Height**

Monument signs in the CRE district are limited to a height of six feet. Due to the fact that the current sign found along W. Springfield Avenue is six feet-11 inches tall, the applicant has found that the layout of on-street parking along the north side of W. Springfield Avenue, as well as the curvature of W. Springfield Avenue, minimizes visibility for this sign. A proposed height of eight feet would greatly enhance the visibility of the recreation center's signage along busy W. Springfield Avenue. Enhanced visibility is key to better promoting the Urbana Park District's programming opportunities. This change would represent a 33.3% variance from the maximum allowable sign height of six feet, and, according to Section XI-3.C.2(b)(9) of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, would require a Major Variance.

### **Digital Display and Sign Area**

Faces of monument signs in the CRE district are limited to an area of 32 square feet, or 50 square feet when two frontages are combined. Electronic displays are also limited to an area equivalent to no more than 50% of the area of the sign face. Consequently, when a sign face is 32 square feet in area, its electronic display can be no more than 16 feet in area. When a sign face is 50 square feet in area, its electronic display can be no more than 25 square feet in area. The face of the proposed sign structure would be 31 square feet in area. The electronic display would take up 15 square feet, which would be 48.3% of the entire area of the sign face. Therefore, this requirement will be met. The electronic display would meet all requirements established under Section IX-4 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, and would provide greater visibility for the Urbana Park District's programs and events.

The upper half of the sign, a section that is 16 square feet in area, would list the name of the Phillips Recreation Center. This section would be internally illuminated and double-sided.

### **Sign Setback**

The proposed sign would be setback six feet from the public right-of-way along W. Springfield Avenue, which would be 25% less than the required setback of eight feet. Per Section XI-3.C.2(b)(1) of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, this setback would require a Minor Variance. The proposed sign would reduce the nonconforming setback of the current sign found along W. Springfield Avenue by 50%. The applicant finds that, due to the layout and geometries of W. Springfield Avenue, locating the proposed sign eight feet from the public right-of-way would significantly decrease visibility for the sign. Locating the sign six feet from the public right-of-

way would greatly improve visibility, better enabling the Urbana Park District to assist in way-finding for the public.

**Table of Changes**

The following table illustrates the differences between the existing sign found on-site and the proposed sign. These differences are relatively minor in nature.

	<b>Existing Sign</b>	<b>Proposed Sign</b>
<b>Sign Design</b>	Two-Sided, Oriented East and West	Two-Sided, Oriented East and West
<b>Sign Lighting</b>	Internally Illuminated	Electronic Message Board and Internally Illuminated Name Plate
<b>Sign Height</b>	Six Feet-11 Inches	Eight Feet
<b>Sign Setback</b>	Four Feet	Six Feet
<b>Sign Face Area</b>	34 Square Feet	31 Square Feet

**Impact of Sign**

The construction of the proposed sign would not seriously alter the character of the site, as a double-sided sign currently stands along the recreation center’s south frontage. Locating a sign along the south frontage of the Phillips Recreation Center makes sense, due to the relatively high traffic and pedestrian volume along W. Springfield Avenue. The sign would follow all of the requirements established in the Zoning Ordinance, and would not create a nuisance for the surrounding area. The sign would be located roughly halfway down the middle of the block, and the digital portion of the sign would be projected east and west along W. Springfield Avenue, and would not be directed towards the residences and offices located to the south of the Phillips Recreation Center. Although not a significant change from the existing sign, the new sign would be more visible than the one it replaced, improving way-finding for both the users of the Phillips Recreation Center, as well as for those who pass by it.

**Variance Criteria**

Section XI-3 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance requires the Zoning Board of Appeals to make findings based on variance criteria. The following is a review of the criteria as they pertain to this case and the criteria outlined in the ordinance:

1. *Are there special circumstances or special practical difficulties with reference to the parcel concerned, in carrying out the strict application of the ordinance?*

The curvature of W. Springfield Avenue, along with presence of on-street parking along the street’s north side, impedes the visibility of the sign currently located along the southern frontage of the Phillip’s Recreation Center. By replacing this sign with a new sign that is setback six feet from the public right-of-way and which has a height of eight feet, visibility will be greatly enhanced. The proposed sign would be in closer conformity to current setback regulations than is the existing sign.

2. *The proposed variance will not serve as a special privilege because the variance requested is necessary due to special circumstances relating to the land or structure involved or to be used for occupancy thereof which is not generally applicable to other lands or structures in the same district.*

As noted, the curvature of W. Springfield Avenue and the presence of on-street parking along that street's north side create an impediment towards the visibility of the existing sign located along the southern frontage of the Phillips Recreation Center. The unique placement of the Phillips Recreation Center provides an important opportunity for the Urbana Park District to promote programs and events taking place at the Phillips Recreation Center, as well as throughout the Park District.

3. *The variance requested was not the result of a situation or condition having been knowingly or deliberately created by the Petitioner.*

The Urbana Park District has maintained the Phillips Recreation Center since 1996, and, during that time, has not modified the site, or its bordering public rights-of-way, in any manner that created the current site conditions that impede the existing sign's visibility.

4. *The variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.*

A double-sided, internally illuminated sign currently stands along W. Springfield Avenue. The proposed sign will contain an electronic message board, and be somewhat taller than the existing sign, but setback further than the existing sign. It will be oriented in the same direction as the existing sign.

5. *The variance will not cause a nuisance to the adjacent property.*

By being oriented to the east and west, and located roughly half way along the block, the proposed sign will not create a nuisance for the residences or offices located to the south, west, and east of the recreation center.

6. *The variance represents generally the minimum deviation from requirements of the Zoning Ordinance necessary to accommodate the request.*

The proposed sign is only designed to the extent that it will ensure improved visibility for the Urbana Park District's programs and events.

## **Recommendation**

Pursuant to Section XI-3 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, Minor Variances may be approved a majority vote of the Zoning Board of Appeal's members. In order for a Major Variance to be approved, the Zoning Board of Appeals must recommend approval by a two-thirds majority and forward the case to the City Council for final review and approval.

### **The Zoning Board of Appeals has the following options in Case No. ZBA-2015-MAJ-06:**

- a. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation to approve the variance as requested based on the findings outlined in this memo; or
- b. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may forward this case to the City Council with a recommendation to approve the variance along with certain terms and conditions. If the Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals elects to recommend conditions or recommend approval of the variance on findings other than those articulated herein, they should articulate these findings accordingly; or
- c. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may deny the variance request. If the Zoning Board of Appeals elects to do so, the Board should articulate findings supporting its denial.

### **The Zoning Board of Appeals has the following options in Case No. ZBA-2015-MIN-01:**

- a. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may approve the variance as requested based on the findings outlined in this memo;
- b. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may approve the variance along with certain terms and conditions. If the Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals elects to add conditions or approves the variance on findings other than those articulated herein, they should articulate these findings accordingly; or
- c. The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals may deny the variance request. If the Zoning Board of Appeals elects to do so, the Board should articulate findings supporting its denial.

Based upon the above discussion, staff finds that the proposed sign will not cause any significant nuisance to the surrounding area and that it will improve visibility for programs and events taking place at both the Phillips Recreation Center and throughout the Urbana Park District. Staff recommends that:

- In Case No. ZBA-2015-MAJ-06, the Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals RECOMMEND APPROVAL for the Urbana Park District's request for a Major Variance allowing a sign that is eight feet tall.

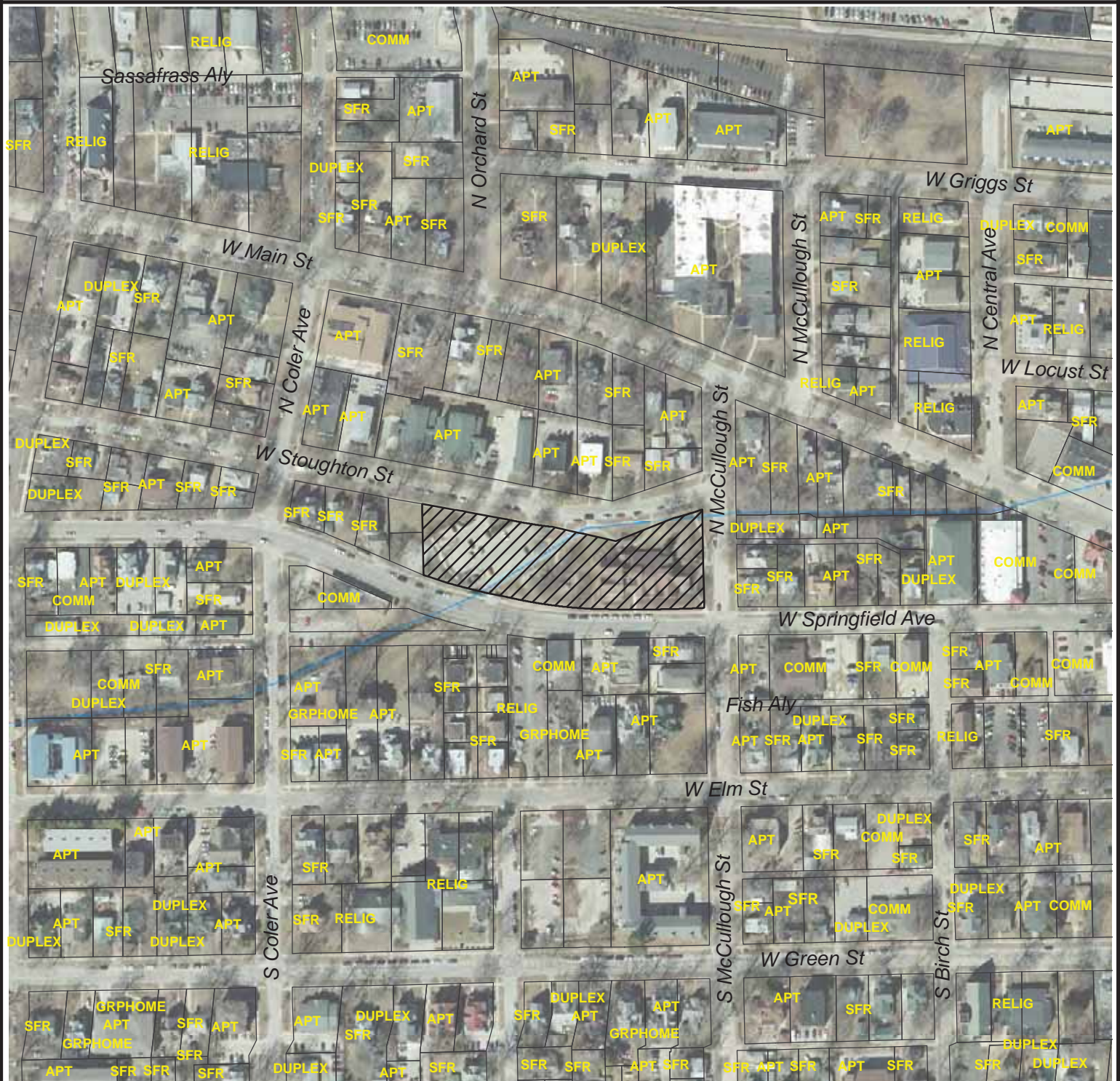
- In Case No. ZBA-2015-MIN-01, the Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals APPROVE the Urbana Park District's request for a Minor Variance for a sign that is setback six feet from the public right-of-way along W. Springfield Avenue.

Attachments:      Exhibit A:      Location & Existing Land-Use Map  
                         Exhibit B:      Zoning Map  
                         Exhibit C:      Future Land-Use Map  
                         Exhibit D:      Application (*including site plan and renderings from applicant*)  
                         Exhibit E:      Site Plan Provided by City Staff  
                         Exhibit F:      Pictures of Existing Sign (to be replaced)

cc:                    Caitlin Lill, Urbana Park District



# Exhibit A: Location & Existing Land-Use Map

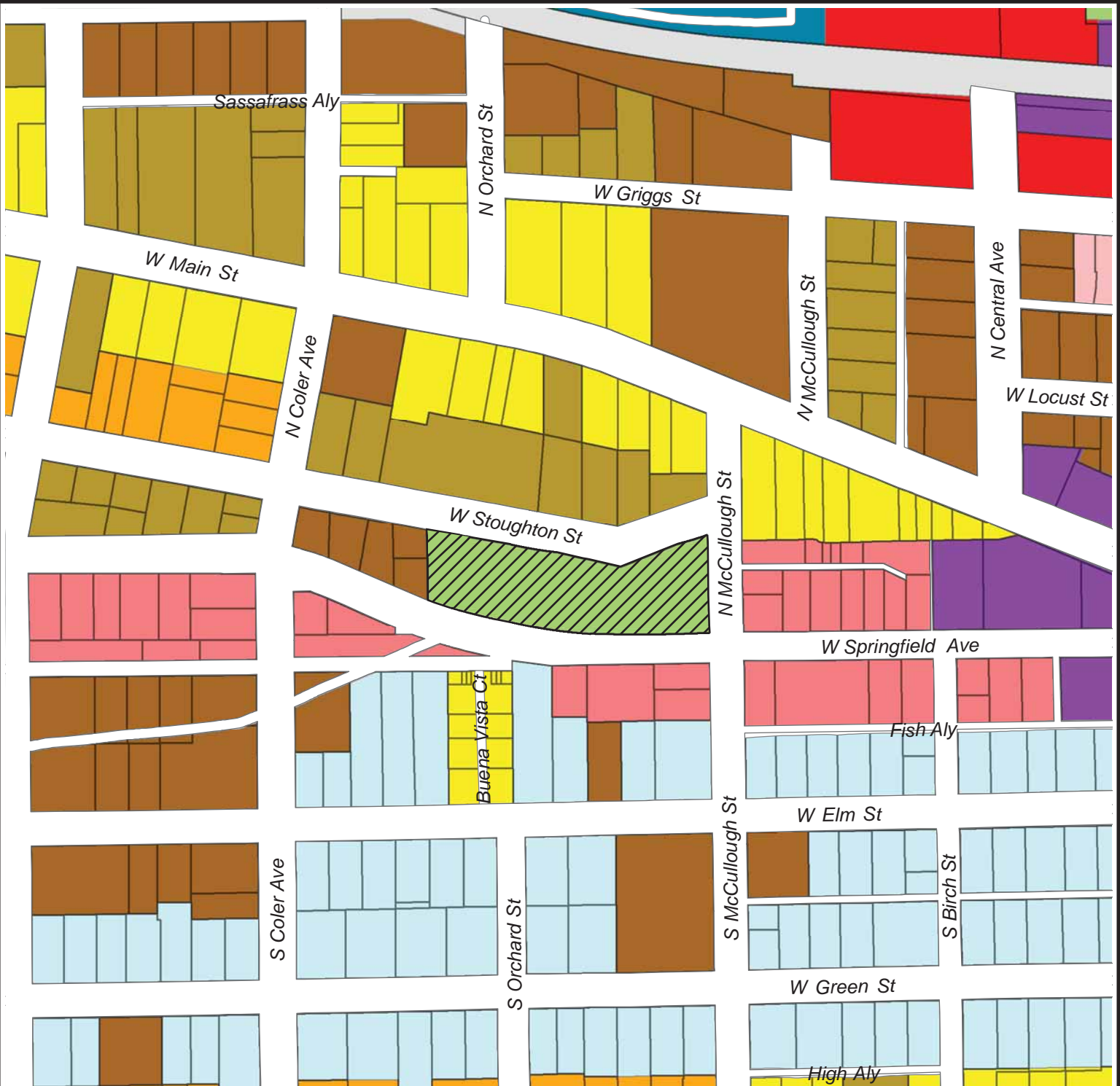


Case: ZBA-2015-MAJ-06 and ZBA-2015-MIN-01  
 Subject: Variances for Sign at Phillips Recreation Center  
 Location: 505 W. Stoughton Street  
 Petitioners: Caitlin Lill












# Exhibit B: Zoning Map

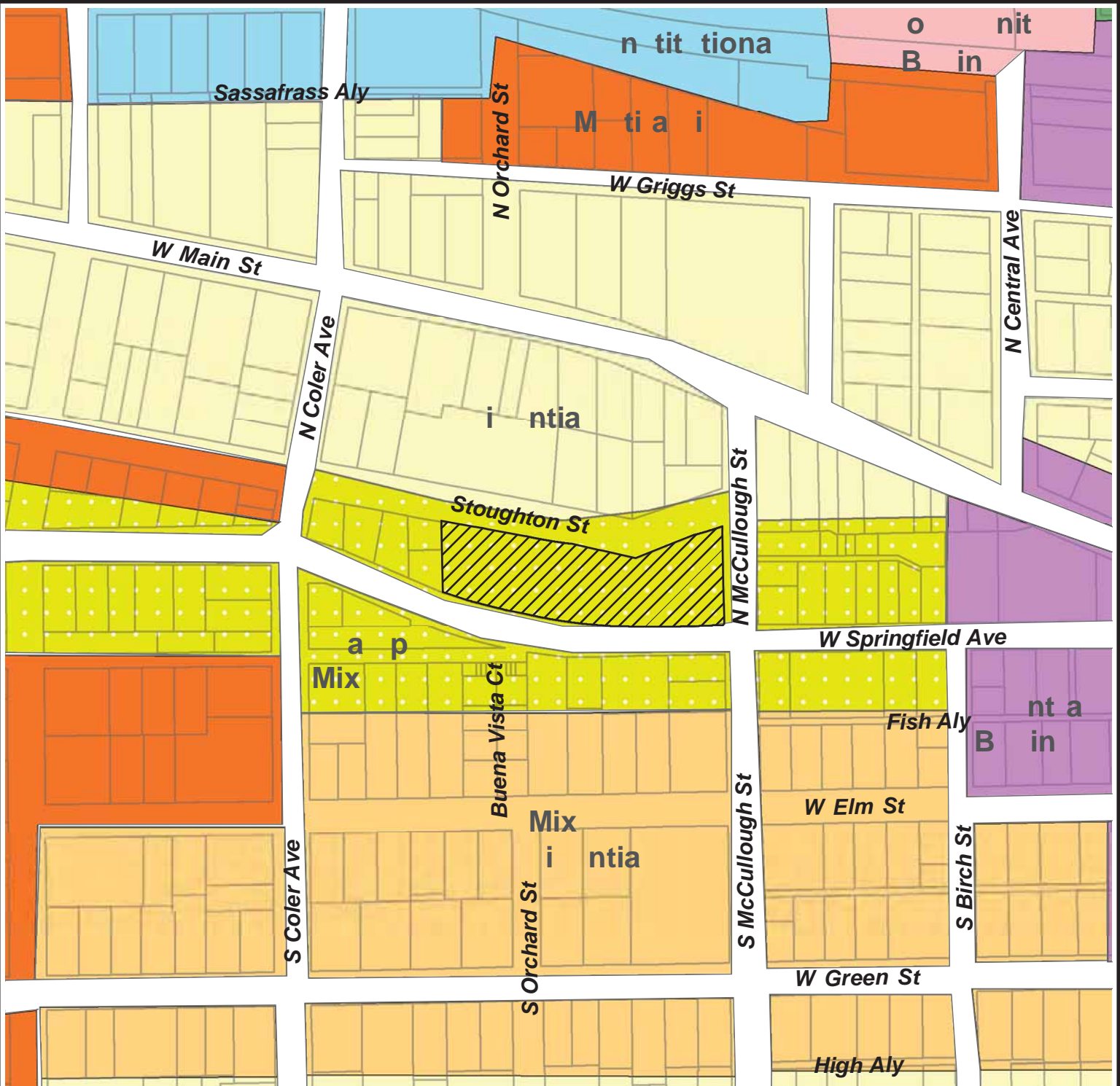


Case: ZBA-2015-MAJ-06 and ZBA-2015-MIN-01  
 Subject: Variances for Sign at Phillips Recreation Center  
 Location: 505 W. Stoughton Street  
 Petitioners: Caitlin Lill











	Subject Property		B1		B4		MIC		R3
	B2		CRE		MOR		R4		
	B3		IN-1		R2		R5		

# Exhibit : t an - Map



Case: ZBA-2015-MAJ-06 and ZBA-2015-MIN-01  
 Subject: Variance for Signs at Phillips Recreation Center  
 Location: 505 W. Stoughton Street  
 Petitioners: Caitlin Lill

 Subject Property

- |   |  |
|---|--|
|  Residential              |  Community Business |
|  Mixed Residential        |  Central Business   |
|  Multi-Family Residential |  Institutional      |
|  Community Mixed Use      |  Par                |







Application for Variance

Zoning Board Of Appeals

APPLICATION FEE - \$175.00 (Major) and \$150.00 (Minor)

The Applicants are responsible for paying the cost of legal publication fees as well. The fees usually run from \$75.00 to \$125.00. The applicant is billed separately by the News-Gazette.

DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE - FOR OFFICE ZBA-2015-MAJ-06

Date Request Filed 04-27-2015 ZBA Case No. ZBA-2015-MIN-01

Fee Paid - Check No. Amount Date

PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION

A VARIATION is requested in conformity with the powers vested in the Zoning Board of Appeals to permit (Insert Use/Construction Proposed and the Type and Extent of Variation Requested) minor variance to Phillips digital sign on the property described below, and in conformity with the plans described on this variance request.

1. APPLICANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Applicant(s): Caitlin Lill Phone: 217-344-9583
Address (street/city/state/zip code): 1011 E. Kerr Urbana, IL 61802
Email Address: cklill@urbanaparks.org
Property interest of Applicant(s) (Owner, Contract Buyer, etc.): Owner

2. OWNER INFORMATION

Name of Owner(s): Urbana Park District Phone: 217-344-9583
Address (street/city/state/zip code): 1011 E. Kerr Urbana, IL 61802
Email Address: cklill@urbanaparks.org
Is this property owned by a Land Trust? [ ] Yes [X] No
If yes, please attach a list of all individuals holding an interest in said Trust.

3. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Location of Subject Site: Phillips Recreation Center
PIN # of Location: 92-21-17-126-008
Lot Size: 2.4 acres

Current Zoning Designation: Conservation, Recreation and Education

Current Land Use (*vacant, residence, grocery, factory, etc*): Recreation Center

Proposed Land Use: Installation of a digital sign with a minor variance - 6 foot set-back

Legal Description: Lots 5, 6 and 7 in Block of Sim's Addition; Lots 1 & 2 of a Subdivision of Lot 35 of a Subdivision of the South Part of the SW1/4 of Section 8, Township 19 North, Range 9 East of the Third Principal Meridian; portion of Lot 4 lying North of the right of way.

#### 4. CONSULTANT INFORMATION

**Name of Architect(s):**

Phone:

Address (*street/city/state/zip code*):

Email Address:

**Name of Engineers(s):**

Phone:

Address (*street/city/state/zip code*):

Email Address:

**Name of Surveyor(s):**

Phone:

Address (*street/city/state/zip code*):

Email Address:

**Name of Professional Site Planner(s):**

Phone:

Address (*street/city/state/zip code*):

Email Address:

**Name of Attorney(s):**

Phone:

Address (*street/city/state/zip code*):

Email Address:

#### 5. REASONS FOR VARIATION

Identify and explain any special circumstances or practical difficulties in carrying out the strict application of the Zoning Ordinance with respect to the subject parcel.

The curve and angle of Springfield Ave. adjacent to the Phillips Rec Center, combined with the current allowance of parking along the north side of the street makes us believe that an 8 foot set-back would make the sign difficult for drivers to read and for our staff to program.

Explain how the variance is necessary due to special conditions relating to the land or structure involved which are not generally applicable to other property in the same district.

Springfield, as a main thoroughfair in Urbana, is a logical place to put a sign, and the new sign will replace a non-digital sign in that location. However, the curve of the road and the cars parked on the north side of the street present a challenge that would be alleviated by moving the sign to a 6 foot set-back. This would not be the case for other CRE properties that do not have the same physical and sight-line challenges.



Explain how the variance is not the result of a situation or condition that was knowingly or deliberately created by you (the Petitioner).

Foot and vehicular traffic in the area make this an ideal place to put a sign promoting the Urbana Park District. However, we are challenged by the physical layout of the road and parking along Springfield which will significantly decrease visibility with an 8-foot set back.

Explain why the variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood.

The current sign is placed at a 4 foot set-back with no issues. Our request for a minor variance of a 6 foot set-back would only improve the visibility of the sign and not alter its physical presence along Springfield, which has already been approved by the city.

Explain why the variance will not cause a nuisance to adjacent property.

The minor variance will not cause a nuisance due to following all protocols lined out in the CRE zoning ordinance, including only changing content every 3 minutes, no animation, and dimming of the lights at night.

Does the variance represent the minimum deviation necessary from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance? Explain.

The new digital sign at the Phillips Recreation Center will follow all other protocols established by the CRE zoning ordinance with the exception of the minor variance of 6 feet set-back from the public right of way. This falls under the 25% change that would have required a major variance application.

*NOTE: If additional space is needed to accurately answer any question, please attach extra pages to the application.*

*By submitting this application, you are granting permission for City staff to post on the property a temporary yard sign announcing the public hearing to be held for your request.*

#### CERTIFICATION BY THE APPLICANT

I certify all the information contained in this application form or any attachment(s), document(s) or plan(s) submitted herewith are true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I am either the property owner or authorized to make this application on the owner's behalf.



Applicant's Signature

4/27/15

Date

CITY OF URBANA

UTILITY PERMIT # 5692

Date January 12, 2015  
Applicant Urbana Park District  
Address 1011 E. Kerr  
C, S, Z Urbana, IL 61802  
Phone 217-344-9583

erect 1 monument sign N/A  
Type of Improvement Proposed Use Dwelling Units Removed

Location of Work 505 W. Stoughton

PI # 92-21-17-126-008

Zoning District CRE EZ Yes      No     

Remarks: Please call 384-2430 to schedule a foundation  
and final inspection.

31.25 sq.ft. . \$19,750 waived  
Area (ft 2) Estimated Cost Permit Fee

[Signature]  
Authorized Signature

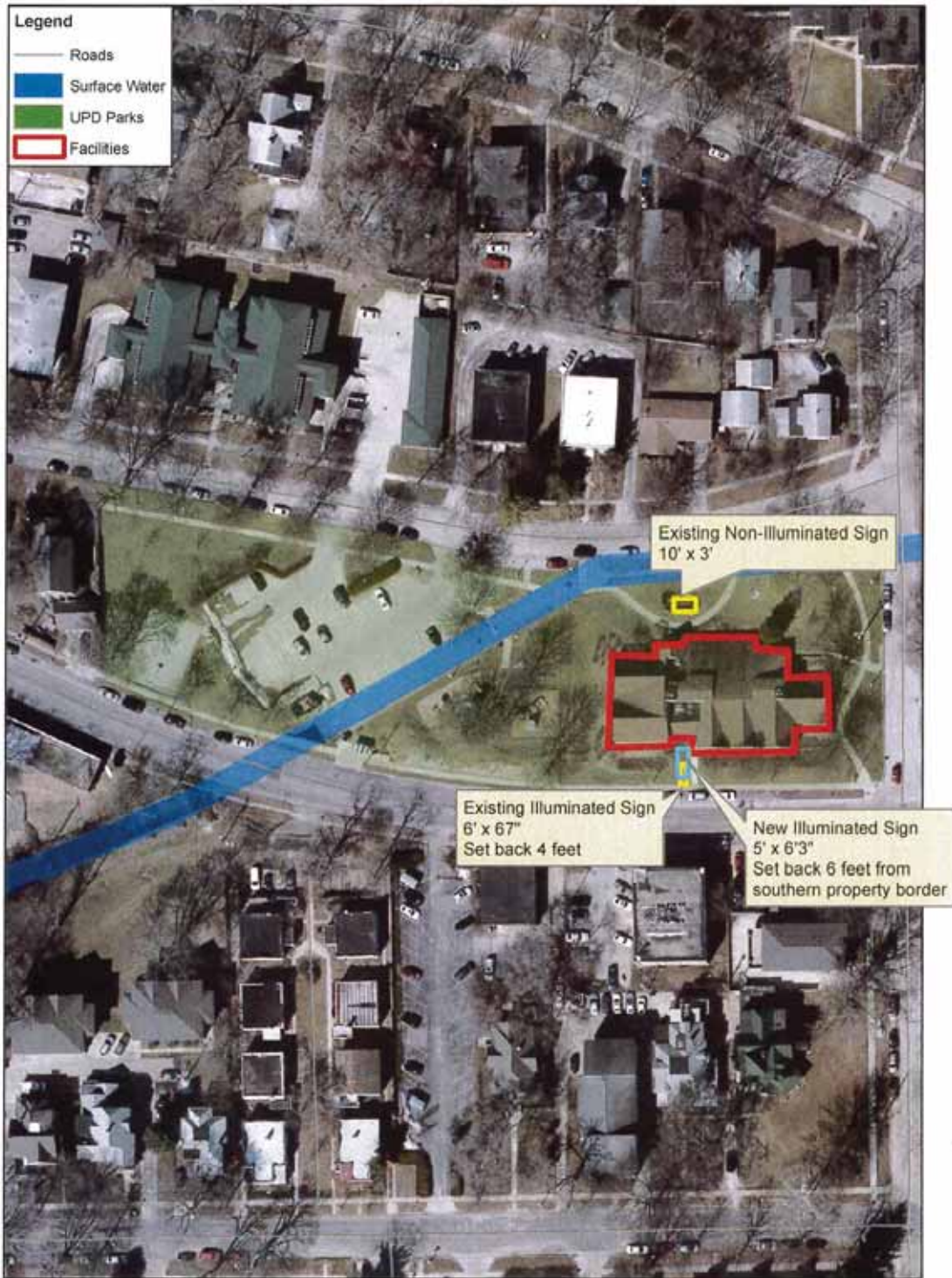
*\*Utility Permit Already  
Obtained by Applicant  
from City*



# Site Plan from Applicant



## Urbana Park District Phillips Recreation Center



Date: 4/21/13  
Source: CCRPC, UPD, CCC  
Author: CKL

\*Sign dimensions refer to area of face of signs.



*Rendering of Proposed Sign from Applicant*



Date: 05/08/2015

Client:  
Urbana Park Dist.  
Phillips Recreation Center

Project:  
Monument Sign

Notes:  
2' 7" X 6' 3" double-sided,  
internally illuminated sign.

Replace existing Zip Track  
faces with 2' 5" X 6' 3",  
19mm monochrome  
electronic message center  
(EMC). Minimum 5" letter  
height

Includes aluminum  
sheeting around message  
center to fill empty area  
between message center  
and sign cabinet.

Drawing Location:  
\\SERVER\American Dowell 2015\C Childress\Drawings\  
Urbana Park District\Phillip Recreation Center Rev. 1

Approval Signature:

Sales & Design:

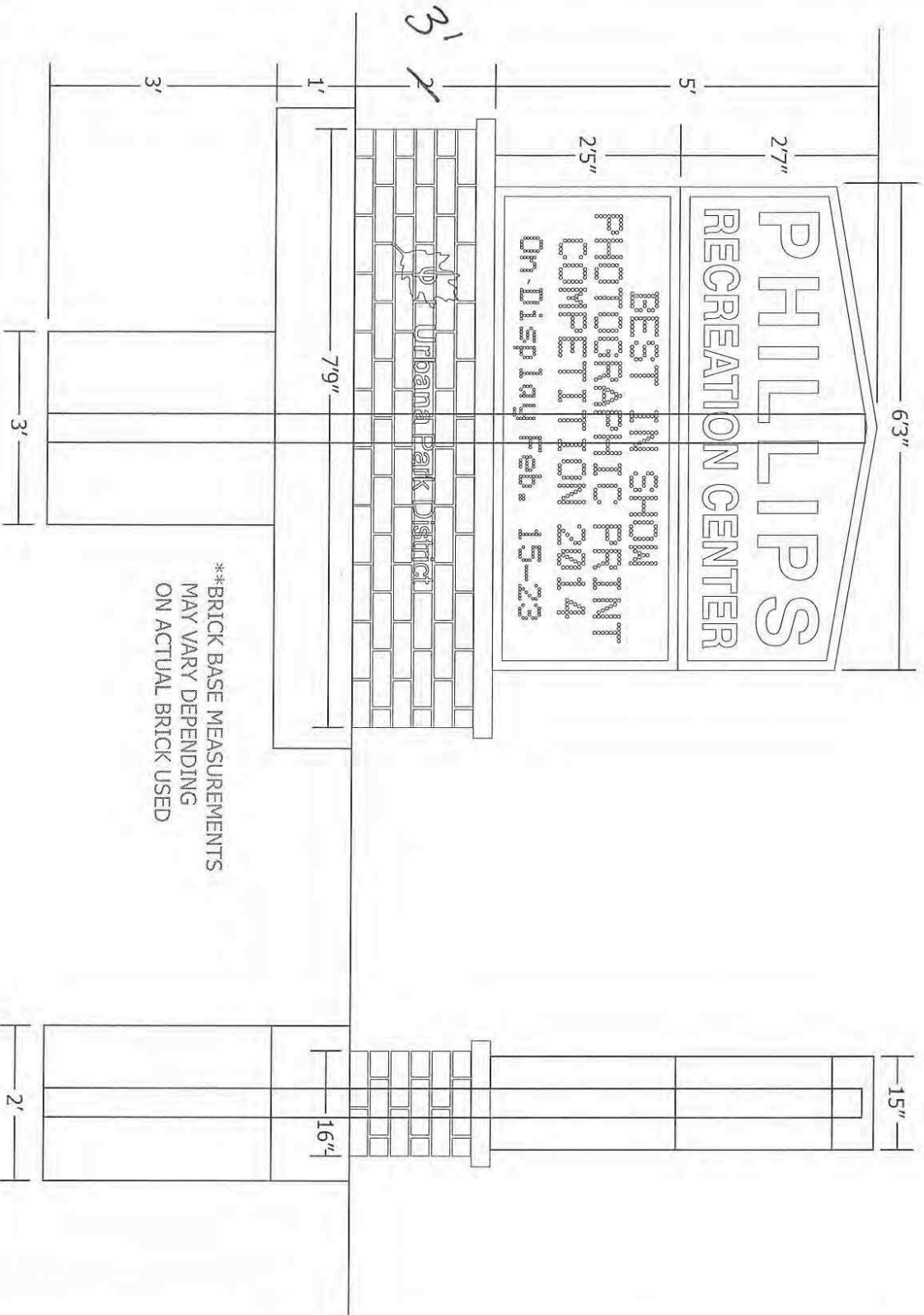
  
**AMERICAN DOWELL**  
**SIGN CRAFTERS**  
PROUDLY SERVING EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS OVER 60 YEARS  
Travis Eastin  
teastin@americandowell.com

217-359-6696  
217-359-0803(fax)  
1712 W. Hensley Rd. Box. 3788  
Champaign, IL 61826

SCALE: 1/2"=1'

THIS DRAWING IS PROPERTY OF AMERICAN DOWELL SIGN COMPANY AND ALL RIGHTS FOR REPRODUCTION ARE RESERVED BY AMERICAN DOWELL SIGN COMPANY

# Rendering of Proposed Sign from Applicant



\*\*BRICK BASE MEASUREMENTS  
MAY VARY DEPENDING  
ON ACTUAL BRICK USED

SCALE: 1/2"=1'

Date: 12/8/2014

Client:  
Urbana Park Dist.  
Phillips Recreation Center

Project:  
-Monument Sign

Notes:  
- 2' 7" X 6' 3" double-sided, internally illuminated sign.  
- 2' 5" X 6' 3" double-sided, electronic message center.

\*\*Minimum 5" letter height

Drawing Location:  
teastin14\Drawings\  
Urbana Park District\  
Phillip Recreation Center(1)

Approval Signature:

Sales & Design:

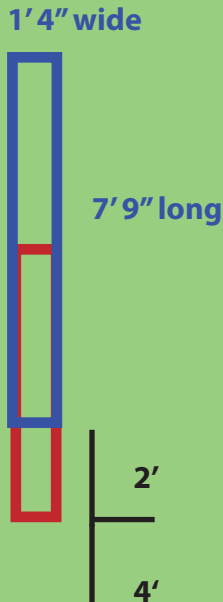


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SIGN COMPANY  
PROUDLY SERVING EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS OVER 60 YEARS  
Travis Eastin  
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217-359-6696  
217-359-0803(fax)  
1712 W. Hensley Rd. Box. 3788  
Champaign, IL 61826

Exhibit E: Site Plan  
Provided by City Staff



Existing Sign Base:  
5' 9" long  
1' 3" Wide



Sidewalk

W. Springfield Avenue (On-Street Parking)



 Proposed Sign and Dimensions	 Existing Sign and Dimensions	 Property Line
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**Exhibit F: Pictures of Existing Sign (to be replaced)**



**From the west along W. Springfield Avenue**



**From the east along W. Springfield Avenue**