

Notice of Board of Zoning and Building Appeals

St Matthew Monument Sign

RE: File Number: DR-0016-2023 (Planning Commission Meeting 7/26/2023 7:00 PM)

File Number: V-0018-2023 (Planning Commission Meeting 7/26/2023 7:00 PM)

Appellant: George Harvey on behalf of St Matthew Parish

300 Cadbury Ct / Gahanna, OH 43230

Phone 330-904-1083 / Email Gharvey@StMatthew.net

To consider a variance application to vary Sections 1165.09(a)(4)(B), 1165.09(a)(4)(C), and 1165.09(a)(4)(D) of the Codified Ordinances of the City of Gahanna. Note: Section 1165.08(b)(9) Commission Approved ROW and height variances.

Property location: 807 Havens Corners Rd. / Gahanna, OH 43230

Parcel ID: 025-003900

Current Zoning RID

St. Matthew Monument Sign

George Harvey, applicant

Appealing decision of Planning Committee based on all facts not considered, misconceptions of road significance and the type of sign we are requesting to construct. Was not a clear understanding of the usage of the sign and the benefits to the community as well as the general population and the city of Gahanna. There is a misconception of electronic signs distracting drivers. The committee was not aware of current signage situation. Drive-by comments about true line of sight were not considered. There was not a good understanding of the true potential of sign technology being employed. Gahanna Land Use Plan was not a consideration. Interesting to note the inconsistency of variance votes vs. comments.

Proposed Exhibits:

B) DOT study finds digital billboards don't distract drivers.

C) Photo of typical school time front lawn picture

D) Gahanna Land Use plan referenced pages 53, 56, 93

Havens Corners Road traffic count is now approaching 18,000 vehicles per day. In the 2008-2010 timeframe, the County Engineer proposed the widening of Hamilton Road when vehicle counts were approximately 14,000 vehicles per day. Once the Intel factory is open in Licking County, Havens Corners



Road traffic will expand substantially as the secondary connector from the Intel Industrial area and I-670. (I-270 to SR 161 will be the primary connector.)

While the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission still considers Havens Corners Road an urban minor artery, with the building of the Gahanna school's practice fields complex, Intel investments and the planned widening, the road is already demonstrating signs of capacity with stop and go traffic during peak hours in the morning and evening between Hamilton and Reynoldsburg – New Albany Road. With the capacity and willingness to display community and emergency information the electronic portion could easily be used to display information similar to ODOT's usage of their electronic highway signs providing Amber Alerts, weather advisories, traffic alerts, road construction, and emergency services information. The proposed sign utilizes cell phone technology able to be accessed 24/7 by any authorized individual (police and traffic departments).

Per attached study, drivers are not distracted by digital billboards alongside roads, according to a study conducted by the Department of Transportation (DOT). The study, which was released by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), found that drivers are not any more likely to be distracted by digital billboards than stationary signs. For visitors not familiar with our location, being confident of the location by an electronic sign is much better than them looking at their GPS map system and ignoring the opposing traffic on a narrow no passing zone two lane road.

As for visibility, the sign is the same size and in the same location for the past 20 years. It is located on a straight road not close to any intersections. The more dangerous situation is when drivers cannot find the school or charitable works building behind the church.

St Matthew hosts many youth basketball and volleyball games and tournaments in the athletic center behind the school. These events bring in many families outside our community who have a difficult time finding the gym. A major distraction is when families can't find the game location because of poor signage and visibility of school and gym.

Our business as a church, school, sports destination, and Rectory brings in more cars than most businesses in the Gahanna commercial area. We need visibility for drivers looking for us who have not been to the property before, especially during the night hours.

St Matthew is a large parish of about 4,000 people with anywhere between 600 and 1,400 people coming and going in and out of our parish daily whether it's a Sunday or a school day. We have over 100 employees and many vendors come and go on a very frequent basis. We are one of the largest parishes and operate one of the largest Parish elementary schools in the Columbus Diocese. Our parish involvement in the greater Gahanna area is also demonstrated by our charitable works, and the number of people we serve in the community. We also serve as a central point for GRIN 4 Gahanna. In July alone Charitable Works provided 15,585 meals to 1,039 individuals in 346 households in Greater Gahanna area making St Matthew a major community service organization. Would be helpful to share that information with the community.

Lincoln HS utilize their sign for school only very effectively year-round. Worth noting it is 100% electronic, full color, and the message changes every 10 seconds across the street from a residential neighborhood. We anticipate that sign will be relocated onto Havens Corners Road when the new HS is constructed, a half mile from St Matthew. In contrast the St Matthew sign will be utilized by multiple organizations; a fixed sign cannot compare to the utilization and flexibility of an electronic sign.



Suriano in his words is pretty hard and fast about the reduction of the percentage of electronic proportions of the sign. He thinks the Peace Lutheran sign is a good precedent in terms of the way that they balance the electronic portion of the sign compared to the non-moving part of the sign in terms of the monument kind of nature of it. He never acknowledges their sign is for a single organization as are all the signs discussed. Again, St Matthew Parish supports multiple major organizations. One electronic sign is a significantly better solution than multiple signs, one for each organization. Significant hardship.

Currently St Matthew campus rotates through over 25 different banners, plus smaller signs informing the community of blood drives, food pantry hours, and Charitable Works activities. Banners are used for registration information, community bazaar, festival, sports sign-ups, school and church events and programs. This community information is not advertising as it seeks to inform the community of events and opportunities that benefit the community. It could be argued these waving banners facing different directions pose a much bigger risk of distracting drivers than a professionally displayed electronic communication media displaying a single message at a time, with instantaneous changes.


With respect to our neighbors, no one has objected to our plan to add an electronic portion to our sign. The thought is, they like the idea of eliminating the extra clutter of banners, signs, and flags on the front yard.

We are good neighbors, our parking lots are well lit, with trees in place to block ambient light from homes. We offer outside surveillance including 26 cameras and 3 license plate readers to assist in the security of our neighborhood. Out of the 18 adjacent property owners who received registered letters informing them about our sign proposal there were zero responses and no one showed up for hearing.

During the first meeting Tamarkin felt the commission needs to be cognizant of residents looking out their window and not seeing neon, colors, movement or flashing. We would like to remind the Board we are requesting an LED sign that does not have animation, is not flashing, it automatically adjusts to ambient light, it is less reflective than our current externally lit sign with high gloss gold letters. He also pointed out that Hamilton Road is getting busier with lots going on. Those comments describe the future of Havens Corners Road. We are only a half mile from Hamilton, streetlights are already installed past the St Matthew property. We could argue vehicle traffic is much more annoying at night than a sign. Traffic can be very frustrating during the day as you attempt to get onto the road.

Gahanna Land Use plan: We heard much about the residential character along Havens Corners Rd. However, future development along the south side of Havens Corners Road from the high school east to St. Matthew parish is planned for Medium Density Residential MDR). (See Page 53 and 93 attached) On page 56, MDR is defined as buildings up to 40 feet in height, building coverage of 30-50 percent, front set back of 0-20 feet, 5-20 units per acre, and permitted uses of multifamily, attached or detached single family. The new football stadium less than a half mile away down the road certainly defines our neighborhood as an anchor for mixed use much more than our requested sign.

In summary, the electronic sign proposed is an efficient way to share important community information, looks more professional, less distracting and more attractive than current outdated sign, banners and flags. As the area grows so will the need to communicate additional information in the most flexible and scalable means. Our area is about to experience a surge in growth it has not seen for several years. We are attempting to get ahead of the curve. Your help with approval and continued guidance are needed and appreciated.


George Harvey, Applicant

8-25-23
Date

CV

**CITY OF GAHANNA, OHIO
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**

ST MATTHEW PARISH

and

GEORGE HARVEY

Applicants – Appellants

v.

CITY OF GAHANNA

PLANNING COMMISSION

Appellee.

Case No.:

Parcel IDS: 025-003900-00

Current Zoning RID

Denial Action Certified 8.01.2023

AFFIDAVIT OF GEORGE HARVEY

COUNTY OF FRANKLIN SS:

STATE OF OHIO SS:

Now comes the affiant, George Harvey, having been sworn with penalty of perjury and hereby states the following:

- 1) I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth herein.
- 2) This affidavit is submitted in support of the Applicant – Appellant’s Notice of Appeal pursuant to the Code of Ordinance, Part One, Title Five, Chapter 147.03.
- 3) I am the applicant for the above captioned case and an authorized representative for the owner and current non-profit organization in operation (St Matthew Parish) for the property located at 807 Havens Corners Rd, Parcel ID: 025-003900
- 4) Pursuant to Code of Ordinances, Part One, Title Five, Chapter 147.03(3), the attached Exhibit A is a list of all property owners contiguous to, and directly across the street from the property, as appearing on the Franklin County Auditor’s site (with are the names and site mailing addresses).

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the hand of the undersigned has been set the 25th day of August, 2023.


George Harvey

Sworn to and subscribed before me in my presence the 25th day of August, 2023

ANNA M. VANDERHOFF, ATTY.
NOTARY PUBLIC • STATE OF OHIO
My Commission Has No Expiration Date
Section 147.03 O.R.C.



Notary Public

Exhibit A

Adjacent Properties to Parcel 025-003900-00 aka 807 Havens Corners Rd

MARIA E PEREZ
AARON SMITH
749 HAVENS CORNERS RD
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

VALLEE H WIGGINS
MADELINE V WIGGINS
752 JONSOL CT
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

HASTINGS FLETCHER C
HASTINGS PATRICIA K
748 JONSOL CT
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

MICHAEL MAJERUS
MICHELLE MARKLEY MAJERUS
744 JONSOL CT
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

MATTHEW S BOWEN
NICOLE M BOWEN
740 JONSOL CT
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

MICHAEL D MOORE
735 JONSOL CT
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

WOLDAI G TESFASELESSI
SABA A KIDANEMARIAM
756 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

JOSEPH M PALMORE
SUSAN C PALMORE
766 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

MILES J KEENAN
ANNA L KEENAN
770 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

DEBORAH S JONES
772 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

JOANN E HAGHIGHI TR
788 RONSON AVE
TSAI-GALDEN JUI FENG
800 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

WOLDAI G TESFASELESSI
SABA A KIDANEMARIAM
756 RONSON AVE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

ROWSHANAK HEYDARIAN
JOSEPH SWACKHAMMER
105 KINDER PLACE
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

MICHAEL J FARRELL
101 KINDER PL
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

EQUITY TRUST COMPANY CUSTODIAN FBO
THOMAS W, KEYES IRA
95 HELMBRIGHT DR
COLUMBUS, OH 43230

ROCKY FORK HUNT & COUNTRY
5189 CLARK STATE RD
COLUMBUS OH, 43230-2207

Exhibit B

DOT study finds digital billboards don't distract drivers

BY KEITH LAING - 01/07/14 2:57 PM ET

Drivers are not distracted by digital billboards alongside roads, according to a study conducted by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

The study, which was released by the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), found that drivers are not any more likely to be distracted by digital billboards than stationary signs.

"On average, the drivers in this study devoted between 73 and 85 percent of their visual attention to the road ahead for both [Commercial Electronic Variable Message Signs] and standard billboards," the study said. "This range is consistent with earlier field research studies. In the present study, the presence of CEVMS did not appear to be related to a decrease in looking toward the road ahead."

The study surveyed drivers in Richmond, Va. and Reading, Pa. and found that the average length of time drivers spent looking at digital billboards was 379 milliseconds, compared to 335 milliseconds for standard signs.

The results were both well below the "currently accepted threshold of 2,000 milliseconds," the study said.

"The results did not provide evidence indicating that CEVMS, as deployed and tested in the two selected cities, were associated with unacceptably long glances away from the road," the study said. "When dwell times longer than the currently accepted threshold of 2,000 [milliseconds] occurred, the road ahead was still in the driver's field of view. This was the case for both CEVMS and standard billboards."

The results were cheered by the Washington, D.C.-based Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA), which has pushed the transportation department to relax its rules regarding digital billboards.

"Studies have long shown that digital billboards do not cause distracted driving," the outdoor advertising agency said in a statement. "The new federal study released on Dec. 30 comes to the same conclusion."

Exhibit C

St Matthew Parish / Havens Corners view

Current situation



Exhibit D



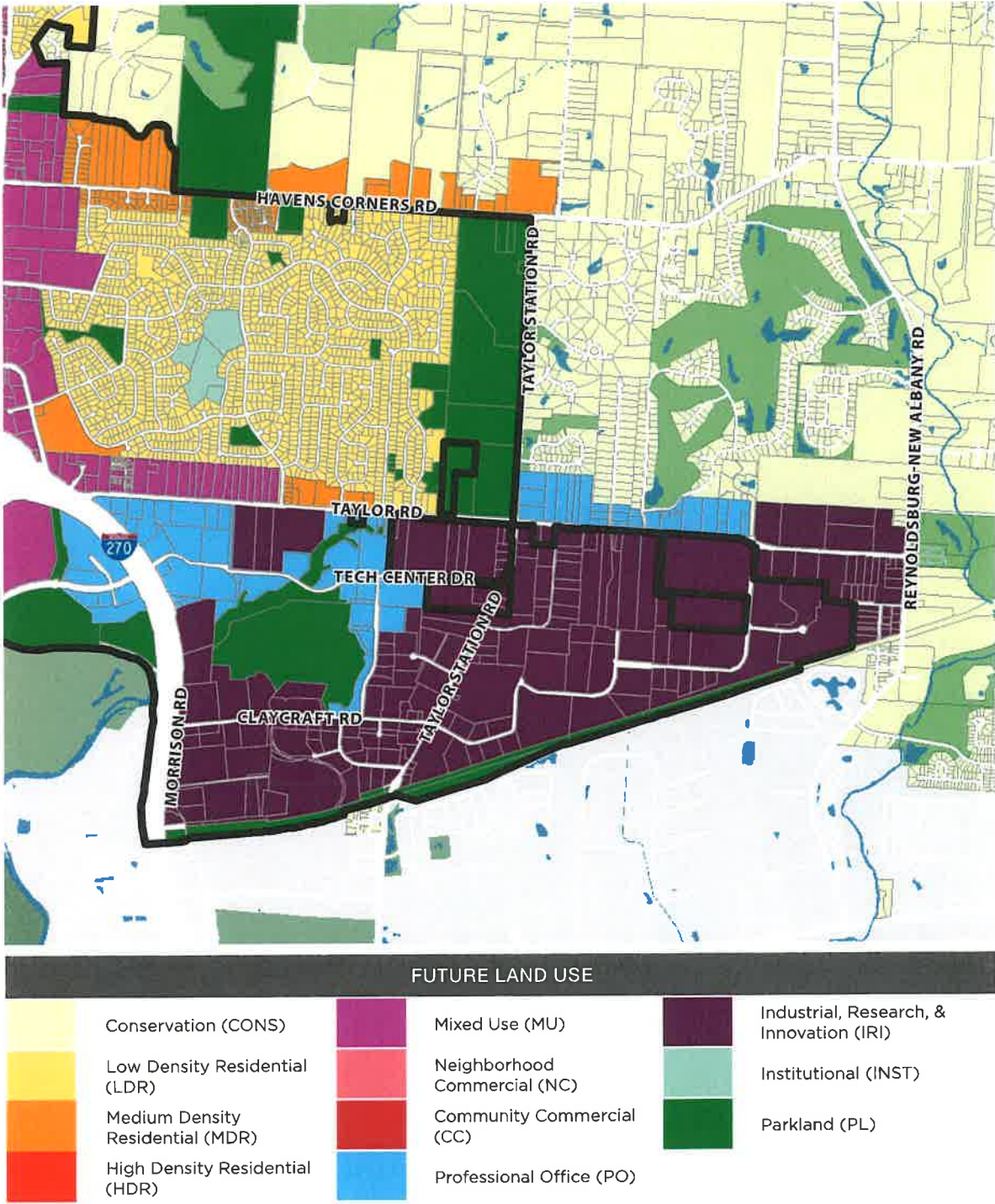
GAHANNA LAND USE PLAN

GAHANNA, OHIO

2019



FIGURE 4-6: GAHANNA FUTURE LAND USE MAP: QUADRANT 4



ckb

FUTURE LAND USE

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL

Description

These areas are intended for well-planned medium density residential uses that can include a range of housing options at a range of price points including small-lot single family homes, duplexes, and townhomes. Developments should incorporate open space and/or public spaces and integrated common areas. Various amenities should be available to residents and could include a community center, recreational paths, and natural areas.

Primary structures and entryways should face the street and be well landscaped. Streets should include sidewalks and street trees, and be designed to promote a walkable environment with short blocks. Parking should include both public on-street parking and private parking in surface lots or garages accessed from a service road behind the structure.

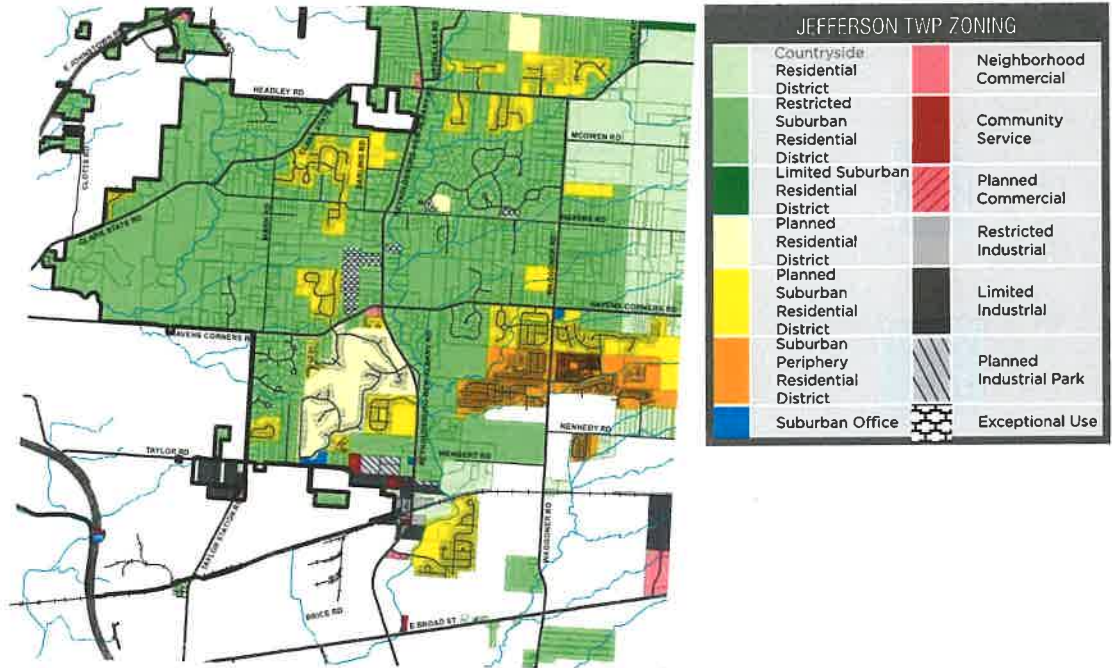


Development Character

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Height | 40 ft |
| Building Coverage | 30-50% |
| Front Setback | 0-20 ft |
| Parking | 1-2 spaces / unit |
| Intensity | 5-20 units / acre |
| Permitted Uses | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detached / Attached Single Family• Multifamily |



FIGURE 5-21: EXISTING ZONING



Source: Jefferson Township Department of Zoning and Building

FIGURE 5-22: FUTURE LAND USE

