



**STAFF REPORT
WEST ALLIS PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, June 28, 2023
6:00 PM**

6. Creative Signage Plan for Allis Tool & Machine Corp, an existing Industrial use, at 647 S. 94 Pl. (Tax Key No. 416-2002-000)

Overview

Peter Rathmann, the President & CEO of Allis Tool & Machine Corp., an existing industrial use, is applying for a Sign Plan Appeal to allow a mural display on the north façade of the existing building. Proposed for the north façade is a 24 ft x 70 ft mural display. The wall is currently comprised of grey concrete. The mural will be considered for an Artscape grant before the West Allis Artscape Leadership Group prior to the Plan Commission meeting. The estimated cost of the mural is \$20,000 and up to a \$7,500 grant may be awarded. As part of the Artscape contract, the property owner agrees not to alter the mural for 5 years after date of completion.



The artists are [Erin LaBonte and Don Krumpos of Algoma, WI](#). They will commence work August 1 and be complete by August 18 according to the proposed Artscape contract.

Plan Commission's role is to consider the location of the mural on the building, and to ensure it satisfies the Creative Sign Program of the sign ordinance.

The proposed location of the mural on the north façade of the building faces the Hank Aaron State Trail. Visibility of this mural along the trail will provide trail users an opportunity to view



legacy of manufacturing in West Allis in an artistic manner. Vegetation along the trail frontage will be maintained by the applicant to provide visibility of the mural.

A concept image of the proposed mural has been provided by the applicant. Shown on the mural plan is a depiction of the manufacturing legacy of West Allis with various items such as an Allis Chalmers tractor shown. The center of the mural displays a seal with the text "Made in the USA"

and “Allis Manufacturing Corp.” An additional banner displays the text “70 Years of Manufacturing.”

Painted wall signs cannot be approved administratively under the Sign Code. The applicant is requesting an appeal to also allow the painted wall sign under the Sign Code’s Creative Sign subsection. The creative sign section grants businesses the opportunity to present their proposal before the Plan Commission.



Creative Sign Requirements

Creative Sign section 13.21(24)(c)(i) requires that signs shall conform with the following:

- i. Design quality. The sign shall:
 1. Constitute a substantial aesthetic improvement to the site and shall have a positive visual impact on the surrounding area.
 2. Be of unique design, and exhibit a high degree of thoughtfulness, imagination, inventiveness, and spirit.
 3. Provide strong graphic character through the imaginative use of graphics, color, texture, quality materials, scale, and proportion.
- ii. Contextual criteria. The sign shall contain at least one of the following elements:
 1. Classic historic design style;
 2. Creative image reflecting current or historic character of the City;
 3. Public art, symbols or imagery relating to the entertainment or design industry; or
 4. Inventive representation of the use, name or logo of the structure or business.
- iii. Architectural criteria. The sign shall:
 1. Utilize and/or enhance the architectural elements of the building.
 2. Be placed in a logical location in relation to the overall composition of the building's facade and not cover any key architectural features/details of the facade.

Based on the proposed design in relation to the above criteria, staff agrees with the applicant that these requirements have been met and believes a Creative Sign Plan should be approved. The sign features a creative way of advertising the business, provides a positive visual impact to the surrounding area, and is located on a wall that does not cover architectural features of the building.

Recommendation: Recommend approval of the Creative Signage Plan for Allis Tool & Machine Corp, an existing Industrial use, at 647 S. 94 Pl. (Tax Key No. 416-2002-000), based on the sign’s positive visual impact, unique design and imagination, strong graphic character, inventive representation of the business and logical placement, which comprehensively satisfy the requirements of the City’s Sign Code Creative Sign Subsection.