



**STAFF REPORT
WEST ALLIS PLAN COMMISSION
Wednesday, June 26, 2019
6:00 PM**

Room 128 – City Hall – 7525 W. Greenfield Ave.

- 6. Signage Plan for Hobby Lobby, an existing arts and crafts store, located at 6900 W. Greenfield Ave. submitted by Jordan Bauer on behalf of Bauer Sign Company. (Tax Key No. 439-0001-007)**

Sign Variance Overview

When an applicant is requesting signage that does not conform with the City's Municipal Code, the applicant is required to request and receive approval from Plan Commission to allow for a variance from the specific regulations.

The Code calls for Plan Commission to review variance requests using the following criteria:

- a. The sign as proposed will not result in undue concentration of signage, which renders it difficult or confusing to read existing signs.*
- b. The proposed sign is unique and of exception design or style so as to enhance the area.*
- c. Site difficulties: unusual site factors preclude the construction of a sign in accordance with this section, which would be visible to the roadway adjacent to the site frontage.*

Exiting Hobby Lobby Signage

Per the City's Municipal Code, Hobby Lobby, which is located at 6900 W. Greenfield Ave. in the West Allis Towne Centre, is permitted two wall signs, with a maximum combined area of 200 square feet.

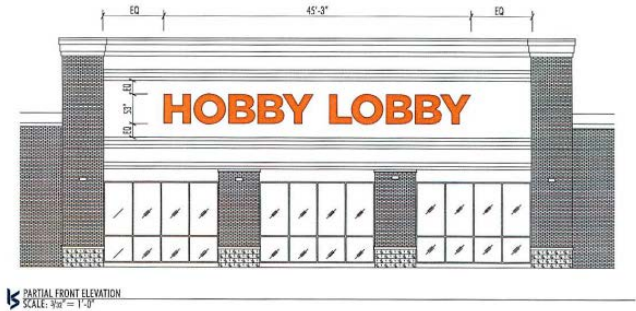
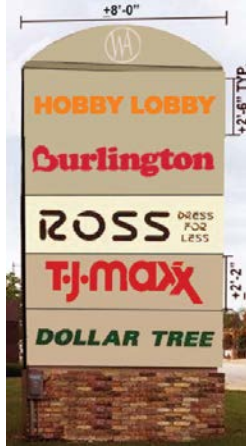
In November 2018, Hobby Lobby submitted a Sign Permit Application for 3 wall signs, with a total of 333.3 sq. ft.:

- 1. Front (east elevation): 213.7 sq. ft.
- 2. Rear (west elevation): 94.7 sq. ft.
- 3. Side (south elevation): 24.9 sq. ft.

At that time, Hobby Lobby was notified that City code allows for only two wall signs, totaling no more than a combined maximum of 200 sq. ft. in area. Further, staff requested Hobby Lobby submit a revised plan to show only two wall signs, and in which the combined areas conform to the Code's allowable square footage. Other major retailers in the same shopping center have recently worked with Development staff to come into compliance with these Code regulations. Hobby Lobby did not wish to submit such a plan. Rather, Hobby Lobby determined that they would prefer to move forward with the front entrance sign only, and would request a variance for additional signage at a later date.

The wall sign that was ultimately requested and approved for the building frontage was 199.8 sq. ft. of the allowable 200 sq. ft. of wall signage. Additionally, signage was approved for the existing monument signs on both Greenfield and 70th St. Staff notified Hobby Lobby that any additional signage would require a variance and approval by Plan Commission. Further, staff explained that,

if Plan Commission did not approve their variance, there would not be an opportunity to have additional wall signage on the building.

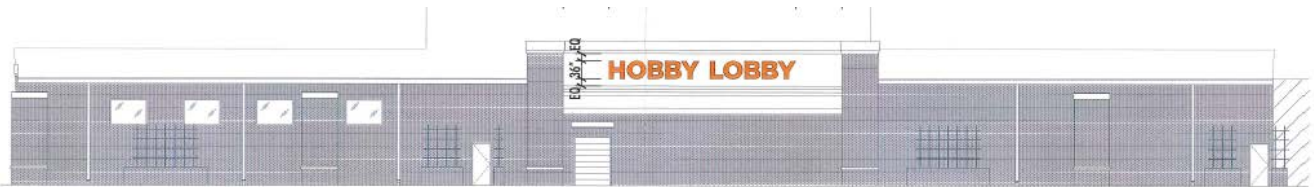


Variance Request Overview

Hobby Lobby is seeking a variance to exceed the 200 sq. ft. of allowable wall signage. Hobby Lobby indicated that their standard store signage is typically comprised of 5 ft. channel letters, totaling 272.2 sq. ft., with an additional 185.5 sq. ft. of department letters. The result being that the existing signage for the front of the building is much smaller than their desired corporate standard.

Therefore, Hobby Lobby is requesting a variance to include a second wall sign on the rear of the building. The proposed sign is a set of 3 ft. illuminated channel letters, totaling 94.7 sq. ft. The additional signage would place them at 94.5 sq. ft. over the maximum allowable area. Hobby Lobby noted that, as part of the design review process, they were required to spend additional funds to include a parapet on the rear elevation, and believe this is an ideal location for a second wall sign.

Additionally, Hobby Lobby does not believe there is adequate visibility of their front sign from W. Greenfield Ave. because it faces the shopping center’s parking lot, rather than the street front. Hobby Lobby cites that a sign on S. 70th St. would be more visible to those passing by.



Variance Request Analysis

Staff has reviewed the request for Hobby Lobby and does not believe the situation warrants a variance. Looking again at the guidelines for granting a sign variance, staff has the following observations:

a. *The sign as proposed will not result in undue concentration of signage, which renders it difficult or confusing to read existing signs.*

A second wall sign of this size would result in Hobby Lobby having more signage than similarly situated businesses within the same complex, and set a precedent for other businesses within the center to request additional signage for their buildings.

b. *The proposed sign is unique and of exception design or style so as to enhance the area.*

The proposed sign does not provide for a unique or creative design.

c. *Site difficulties: unusual site factors preclude the construction of a sign in accordance with this section, which would be visible to the roadway adjacent to the site frontage.*

The site difficulties referenced were that the front sign is not facing Greenfield and, that there were additional construction costs for including a rear parapet on the building.

While the front sign does face the shopping center's parking lot, the sign is still visible from Greenfield Ave. and Hobby Lobby signage is also included on the monument signs on both Greenfield Ave. and S. 70th St. Staff does not find visibility to be a strong enough difficulty to warrant a variance.

Staff does agree that the rear parapet is ideally suited for signage. However, as was requested of Hobby Lobby from the beginning of the application process, staff believes this can be accomplished within the guidelines our of sign regulations. For example, if the front sign were to be 50 sq. ft. smaller and a rear sign were to be proposed at 50 sq. ft. in area, this would still provide for adequately and appropriately sized signage for the shopping center, while meeting the City's code.

Therefore, staff is recommending denial of Hobby Lobby's request for a sign variance.

Recommendation: Recommend denial of the Signage Plan for Hobby Lobby, an existing arts and crafts store, located at 6900 W. Greenfield Ave. submitted by Jordan Bauer on behalf of Bauer Sign Company. (Tax Key No. 439-0001-007)