

CITY OF DUBLIN, OHIO

Project Statement: Master Sign Plan

Applicant: Gabriel Brothers, Inc.
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Address: 6285 Sawmill Road, Dublin, Ohio 43017
Parcel No.: 273-008361

1. Introduction

Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP, by Kevin M. Detroy, Esq., hereby submits this Project Statement and associated exhibits on behalf of Gabriel Brothers, Inc., (“Gabe’s”) requesting approval of a master sign plan for the retail property at 6285 Sawmill Road. A description of the proposed master sign plan is set forth below.

2. Background

Gabe’s operates a retail store on a corner lot property at the intersection of Sawmill Road and Martin Road (the “Property”). Gabe’s leased the Property from Ohio-S.M. Venture Limited Partnership. Gabe’s opened the store on or about November 25, 2017. The existing building, landscaping, parking area, and other improvements, including a block-base monument sign, were constructed on the Property prior to the commencement of the Gabe’s lease.

3. Master Sign Plan Description

Gabe’s requests approval of a master sign plan for the Property to allow the following signs, which are detailed on Exhibits A and B:

- (i) One wall sign mounted above the main entrance of the Gabe’s building facing Sawmill Road. The wall sign will incorporate internally illuminated white channel letters over a blue (PMS 2935C) background, with a light blue (PMS 3125C) swoosh accent on the “G”, which is a Gabe’s corporate standard. The total sign face area will measure 78.5 square feet, and will be mounted at a height of 31.8 feet.
- (ii) One monument sign utilizing the existing block sign base located on the Property near the intersection of Sawmill Road and Martin Road. The sign cabinet will be internally illuminated and will incorporate three colors: White lettering with light blue (PMS 3125C) swoosh accent over a blue (PMS 2935C) background. The sign cabinet will have two identical sides facing north and south along Sawmill Road. The total sign face area per cabinet side will measure 19.1 square feet. The monument sign will be

8.4 feet high and situated approximately 8 feet from the east line of the Property.¹

A master sign plan is necessary in this case to allow two deviations from the strict requirements of Dublin's Sign Code, §§ 153.150-153.164. First, a deviation from § 153.159(A) and (B)(1)(c) is necessary to permit the combination of a wall sign and a ground sign for a single use.² Second, a deviation from §§ 153.159(A)(2) and 153.164 is necessary to permit the placement of a wall sign above a 15 feet elevation. The justifications for these two deviations and the requested master sign plan are set forth below.

4. Master Sign Plan Justifications

The purpose of a master sign plan is to allow a greater degree of flexibility and creativity in sign design and display. § 153.065(H)(2)(e)(1). Rather than apply for one or more variances for signage on a site in the Bridge Street District, an applicant "may request approval for a master sign plan for signs that depart from the requirements of § 153.065(H)[,]" in which case the "required reviewing body shall be permitted to approve alternative requirements for sign design, number, type, size, height, location, and lighting." § 153.065(H)(1)(e)(1)(A).

(a) Wall and Ground Sign Combination

The Dublin Sign Code restricts each use to a single sign type. For the following reasons, Gabe's requests a deviation from this prohibition to allow the proposed wall sign and monument sign.

(1) Lack of Visibility

The essential goals of on-site signage are to: (i) make the public aware of a retailer and (ii) direct traffic to the retailer's location. To be effective, signage must accomplish both goals. In Gabe's case, the unique layout of the Property requires a unique signage strategy. In contrast to many other retailers in the immediate vicinity, the Gabe's building is set back roughly 230 feet from Sawmill Road (see Exhibit D).

¹ Exhibit C is an aerial of the Property taken from Dublin's GIS Mapping System. The image shows the location of the existing monument in relation to the east line of the Property. The approximate distance between the monument sign and the east line of the Property was determined using the straight-line measuring tool included in the GIS Mapping System. In the event of a discrepancy between the distance reported by the GIS Mapping System and the actual distance, such discrepancy would be *de minimis*.

² Section 152.159(A) provides that "[w]all signs are permitted for any business or use not identified by a ground sign. Section 152.159(B)(1)(c) states that ground signs are permitted when, among other conditions, "[t]he use has no wall sign visible from the public right-of-way or adjacent property;..."

This substantial setback makes it difficult for passing vehicles to notice Gabe's, particularly traffic moving southbound from the intersection of West Dublin Granville Road and Sawmill Road.

Moreover, the view of the Gabe's building by motorists travelling southbound on Sawmill Road is further reduced due to the location of the building immediately north of the Property. As shown on Exhibit E, because this building to the north is situated approximately 60 feet from the right of way, the Gabe's building remains obstructed for much of the northern approach. As a result, motorists desiring to visit Gabe's are forced to make a sudden right hand turn onto the Property or miss the turn altogether. In either case, sub-optimal traffic flows are the consequence.

The view of the Gabe's building is further obscured by the tree line and other landscaping along the frontage of the Property. Exhibits F-1 through F-4 clearly demonstrate how the setback and the existing landscaping severely impact Gabe's visibility. The negative impact on the visibility of Gabe's due to the existing landscaping is exacerbated by the strict regulations in the Bridge Street District governing the preservation of trees and shrubs. See § 153.065(D)(3)(i).

The proposed combination of a wall sign and a monument sign is an effective, yet modest, strategy for Gabe's to overcome the Property's inherent visibility obstacles and prevent drivers from becoming disoriented or confused in attempting to locate the Gabe's store from these high-traffic roadways.

(2) Competitive Disadvantage

While the Dublin Sign Code does not allow the combination of multiple sign types for a single use, several other businesses in close proximity to Gabe's have been permitted such sign combinations. Irrespective of the circumstances under which these sign combinations were approved, the fact remains that Gabe's will suffer a competitive disadvantage if it is denied the same opportunity, particularly in light of the compounding visibility issues Gabe's already faces.

(3) A Reasonable Alternative to Permitted Signage

The proposed combination of the wall sign and monument sign is a reasonable alternative to permitted signage on the Property. As a corner lot, Gabe's is permitted: (i) two wall signs with a combined total sign face area of 160 square feet (see § 153.159(A)(4)) or (ii) two ground signs with a combined total height of 20 feet and a combined total sign face area of 66.5 square feet (see § 153.159(B)(5)). The signage proposed herein is preferable to both alternatives.

With respect to wall signs, the total sign face area of 97.6 square feet proposed by Gabe's is substantially less than the allowable sign face area of two permitted wall

signs. Moreover, the placement of a second wall sign facing Martin Road would require the removal of significant landscaping, including a number of large trees.³

With respect to ground signs, constructing a second monument sign exceeding ten feet high and incorporating an additional 46 square feet of sign area would constitute a much greater distraction to the motoring public. In this case, the proposed signage represents the ideal compromise between the two alternative signage arrangements permitted under the Dublin Sign Code.

(b) Wall Sign Height

The Dublin Sign Code prohibits wall signs mounted higher than 15 feet. For the following reasons, Gabe's requests a deviation from this prohibition to allow the proposed wall sign to be mounted at an elevation of 31.8 feet.

First, the Gabe's building was constructed with a large glazed area above the main entrance. This glazed area measures roughly 21 feet in height. The Gabe's building was designed so that a wall sign would be mounted above the glazed area on the parapet. If the 15-foot height restriction is enforced, the wall sign would need to be suspended below the archway. Suspending the wall sign from the archway would obscure much of the glazed area, and would create an awkward appearance entirely out of keeping with the overall design of the building. Moreover, requiring that the sign be suspended would be inconsistent with the signage of other buildings in the District. The parapet is the only reasonable location for the wall sign.

It should be remembered that Gabe's did not create the circumstances necessitating the deviation from the height restriction. Gabe's leased the property with the current improvements in place.

5. Conclusion

Gabe's looks forward to being a valuable contributor to Dublin's commerce by adding a unique and varied use for the building it currently occupies and is requesting approval of its requests to enable a combination of ground and wall signage in lieu of two ground signs or two wall signs as well as consideration of location of the wall sign at a reasonable location. For the reasons described in this Project Statement, Gabe's requests approval of a master sign plan for the Property and approval of the proposed wall sign and monument sign, as detail in the Exhibits.

³ Exhibit G shows the landscaping that would be impacted by a second wall sign facing Martin Road.