



CITY OF DUBLIN.

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## PLANNING REPORT

### PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

SEPTEMBER 4, 2008

#### SECTION I – CASE INFORMATION

#### 2. Metro Center PUD – Sign Plan 08-086AFDP

#### Informal Review Metro Place North and South

- Proposal: Modifications to the center identification and directional signs for the Metro Center Planned Unit Development District located on the west side of Frantz Road between Metro Place North and South.
- Request: Informal review of an amended final development plan under the Planned District provisions of Zoning Code Section 153.050.
- Applicant: Conni Hale, Crawford Hoying Smith; represented by Liz Navarro, Signage Consultants Inc.
- Planning Contacts: Claudia D. Husak, AICP, Planner II or Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Planner II.
- Contact Information: (614) 410-4600, [chusak@dublin.oh.us](mailto:chusak@dublin.oh.us) or [jrauch@dublin.oh.us](mailto:jrauch@dublin.oh.us)

#### Case Summary

This is a request for informal review and feedback of a sign plan for properties within the Metro Center Planned Unit Development District. The proposal addresses joint identification and directional signs for business located on the west side of Frantz Road, within the loop road created by Metro Place. The applicant has filed an amended final development plan application but wishes to receive feedback from the Commission regarding the proposed signs prior to requesting a formal vote. The applicant wishes particular feedback regarding the signs that do not adhere to the requirements of the Zoning Code.

#### Site Considerations

##### *Location and History*

The 40.43-acre site is comprised of nine parcels located within the loop created by Metro Place North and Metro Place South on the west side of Frantz Road. Metro Center was one of the first Planned Unit Development Districts approved in the City of Dublin. The ordinance establishing zoning for this site dates to 1974 and did not include a development text or approved plan for this site. Absent this supporting material the Zoning Code is used to provide development standards.

No records are available for the existing signs on this site, which may have been installed prior to current Code requirements or without permits during the development phase on Metro Center in the 1970s.

#### *Character*

The site contains four multi-story office buildings with interior parking. Commercial uses are located along the Frantz Road frontage and various ponds and open spaces are located on the south side of Metro Place North. The different parcels are connected by the looped internal private roadway system.

#### *Surrounding Zoning and Uses*

The site and the surrounding properties to the north, south and west are zoned Planned Unit Development, as part of the Metro Center PUD. Residential uses located to the east across Frantz Road are also zoned PUD, as part of the Waterford Village plan.

#### *Existing Signs*

This portion of Metro Center has two joint identification signs at the intersections of Frantz Road and Metro Place North and South, and directional signs located interior to the site and along Metro Place North and South. In addition, the three commercial businesses each have a monument sign located along the Frantz Road frontage. These signs are all off-premise as they are located on a separate parcel from the use. The monument signs are generally vary in size and design. The Fifth Third Bank has an additional sign along Metro Place South as permitted by Code due to its location along that right-of-way. The applicant has indicated that the current directional signs do not provide adequate way-finding for the development.

### **Plan Description**

#### *Overview*

The plan indicates 14 new signs for this portion of Metro Center; two center identification signs and 12 directional signs. All but two are proposed to be in the same location as the existing signs. All have a coordinated design scheme, with matching shape, color, font and overall design. No lighting is proposed.

#### *Sign Locations*

The proposed sign plan outlines the locations for the two joint identification signs and the 12 directional signs. The joint identification signs labeled 1 and 8 are located at the Franz Road intersections with Metro Place North and Metro Place South. The 12 directional signs labeled 2-7 and 9-14 are located along Metro Place North and South within the internal street network.

#### *Joint Identification Signs (Signs 1 and 8)*

Code permits joint identification signs in addition to individual tenant signs for occupants within a building complex. The joint identification signs are permitted at a maximum height of 15 feet and a minimum setback of eight feet from the right-of-way. Two joint identification signs are permitted if the site has frontage on two streets.

Metro Center currently includes two existing center identification signs, Signs 1 and 8, along the Frantz Road intersections with Metro Place North and Metro Place South. The applicant is proposing to replace the two existing 8-foot tall signs with 7 feet, 7 inch high signs. The existing signs are located within the right-of-way and the proposal keeps them in these locations. Signs in the right-of-way must be specifically authorized by the City Engineer and City Council.

The design of the proposed joint identification signs is a dark green background with satin silver horizontal bands and "Metro Center" located on the top two bands. The signs are rectangular, but are three sided with copy proposed for two of the three sides. Landscaping is proposed around the base of the signs to be consistent with the area.

#### *Directional Signs (Signs 2-7 and 9-14)*

Code limits directional signs to a maximum size of four square feet, three feet high, rectangular in shape, located on the property to which they refer, not within a public right-of-way. Signs may not be used to identify individual tenants.

The applicant is proposing 12 directional signs, 10 in the same location as the existing signs. The two remaining signs include sign 5, which is indicated in the southwest portion of the site to replace a previously demolished sign, and a new sign 7 to identify the commercial businesses facing Frantz Road. The signs match the joint identification sign in design, color scheme and shape. They are 6 feet tall, replacing the existing four-foot tall signs. The rear of these signs also serves as stop signs to regulate traffic from the internal private street system to the public roads.

The copy for all of the proposed directional signs will include address numbers and arrows, except signs 2 and 7, which will include identify the commercial businesses along the Frantz Road frontage: *Max & Erma's*, *Graeter's* and *Fifth Third Bank*. This makes them off-premise signs by identifying the businesses. Sign 2 is located on the common property located adjacent to the Max & Erma's site and sign 7 is located on the Fifth Third Bank property.

#### **Application Process**

The applicant has submitted an amended final development plan for the proposed modifications to the development text. The Zoning Code authorizes the Planning and Zoning Commission to approve modification(s) to the provisions of the approved development standards text as part of an amended final development plan application, provided that all of the criteria below are met under Section 153.053(E)(2)(B)(4). If the Commission determines that this proposal fails to meet these criteria, then a zoning amendment to the preliminary development plan (rezoning) must be pursued by the applicant.

- (i) The Planning and Zoning Commission determines that, for this Planned District, the Code compliance is not needed in order to ensure that the Planned District is consistent with the Community Plan and compatible with existing, approved, or planned adjacent development;
- (ii) The Planning and Zoning Commission determines that the proposed modification does not significantly alter the list of permitted or conditional uses, cause an inappropriate increase in density or cause inconsistencies with the Community Plan;

- (iii) The proposed modification results in a development of equivalent or higher quality than that which could be achieved through strict application of the requirement(s);
- (iv) The principles of § 153.052(B) are achieved; and
- (v) The development, as proposed on the final development plan, will have no adverse impact upon the surrounding properties or upon the health, safety or general welfare of the community.

## **SECTION II – PLANNING ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION POINTS**

In Planning's opinion, a consolidated sign plan that employs a cohesive design scheme for the site and aids motorists in finding their destinations is needed for this area. However, Planning is concerned about the degree of departure from the requirements of the Zoning Code, particularly with respect to the location of the proposed signs within the right-of-way, and the identification of particular businesses on directional signs. Additionally, some of the signs, particularly signs 7 and 8 are in close proximity to three existing monument signs along Frantz Road that do not complement the proposed sign plan. Aesthetically, these areas appear cluttered, lack in cohesive design, and are a potential source of confusion to motorists.

While some of these are off-premise signs the common management of the property, coordinated site and architectural design, and directional nature of these signs makes this less of an issue. Planning recommends that the Commission informally review the proposal and provide the applicant with feedback on the proposal, including discussion regarding possible modifications of Zoning Code requirements through the amended final development plan approval process.

### **Planning Analysis Summary**

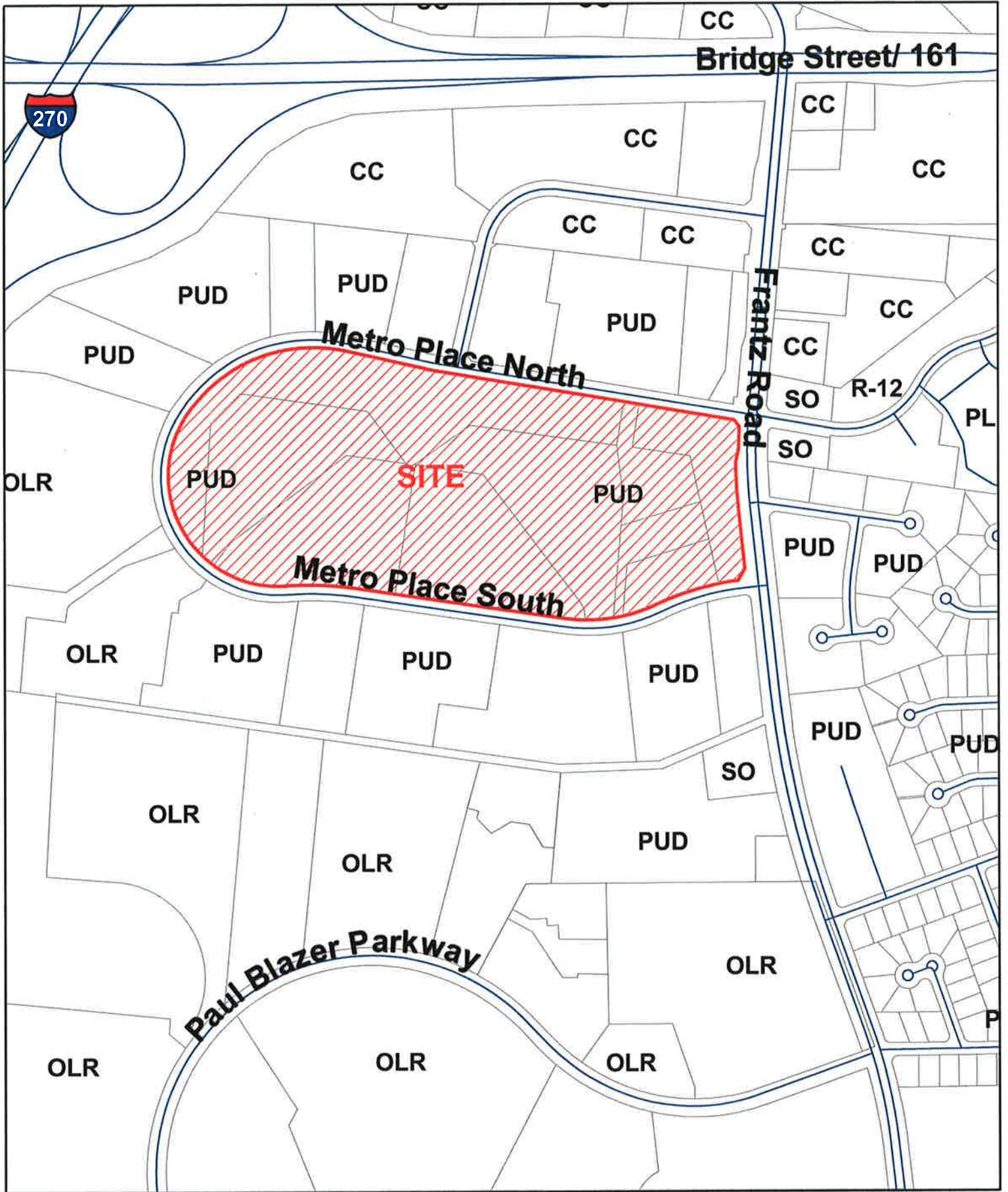
- The proposed sign plan includes a cohesive theme for the business park, which will aid in way-finding.
- If the Commission supports the joint identification signs within the right-of-way, the right-of-way encroachment must be approved by City Council.
- Without sufficient justification and a clear indication of specific circumstances, the proposal to use directional signs to identify individual businesses may set a precedent for future applications.
- Some of the signs proposed near existing signs may lead to a less cohesive appearance than desired.

### **Discussion Points**

- 1) *After review of the application details, does the Commission interpret this application as meeting the above criteria and therefore allow the application to proceed as an amended final development plan, or does the proposal exceed the scope of the criteria and require the applicant to proceed with a rezoning/preliminary development plan?*

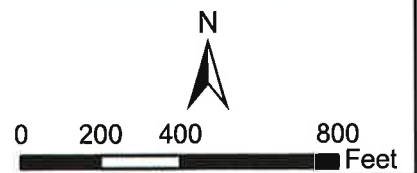
The lack of supporting documentation of this older development complicates this issue in that the level of detail normal for current applications was not part of the development process when this project was approved. A rezoning would require the applicant to complete a development text specific to the sign plan.

- 2) *Is the Commission concerned about the proposed location of the signs?*  
The issue of right-of-way location is within the jurisdiction of City Council, but discussion of this issue by the Commission may be useful to the Council. This discussion should, at a minimum attempt to distinguish this situation from others. For example, the common management of the property, coordinated site and architectural design, and directional nature of the signs may have some influence on this issue.
  
- 3) *Does the Commission agree with Planning that identifying businesses on directional signs is not a precedent that we want to set?*  
Unlike some of the location and design issues, allowing specific names on directional signs may create an impression that the City is changing its view of this regulation. This would require specific modification findings, as permitted by the Zoning Code.
  
- 4) *How does the Commission view the proposed center identification signs in relation to the existing commercial business signs along the Frantz Road frontage?*  
The center identification signs are an important element of the Metro Place development and deserve serious consideration. However, without changes to the nonconforming off-premise signs their current configuration may create some unnecessary problems.



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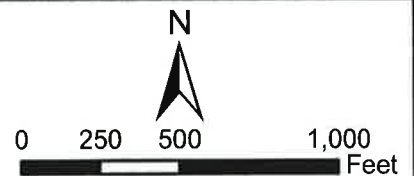
08-086AFDP  
 Amended Final Development Plan  
 Metro Center Signs



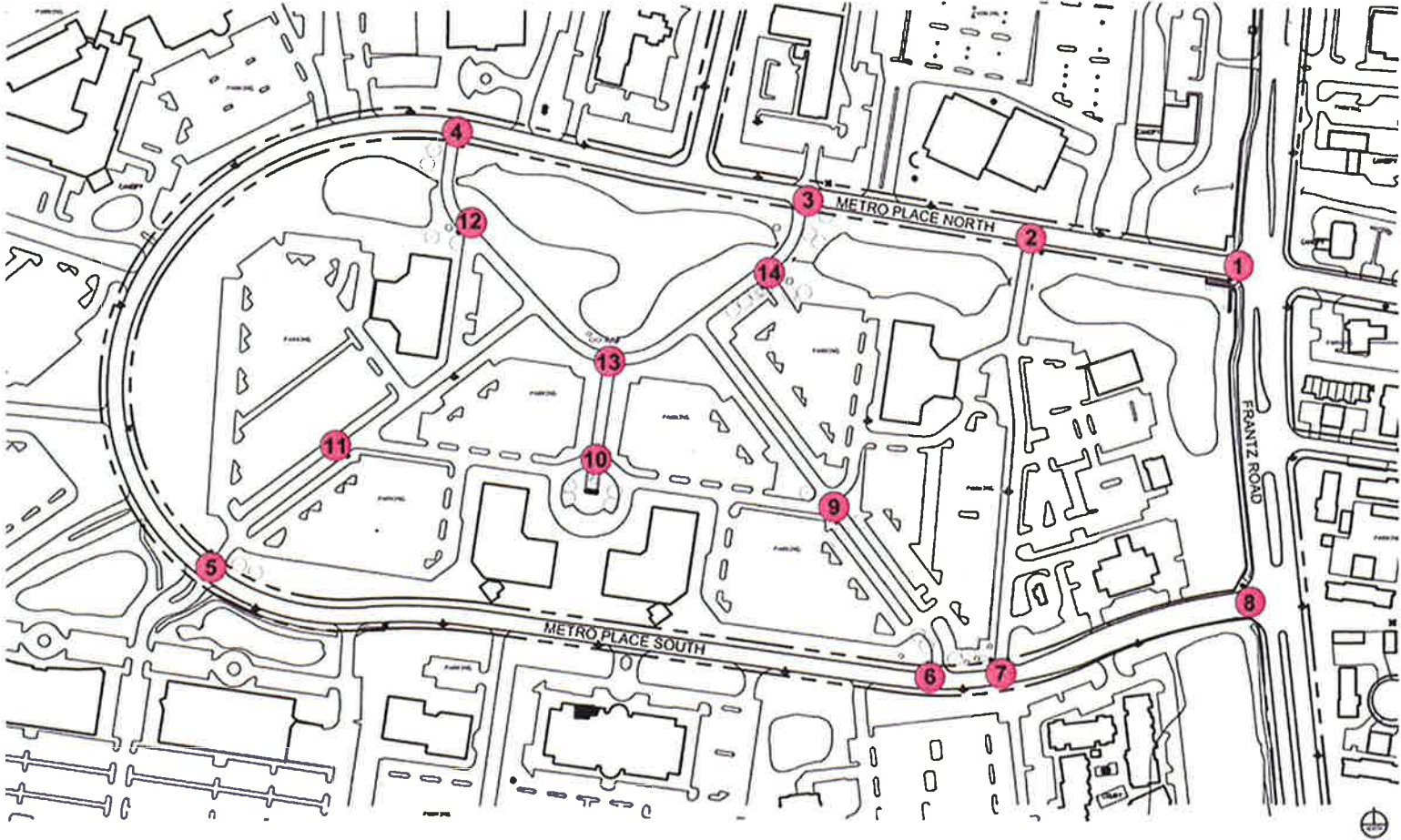


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**08-086AFDP  
Development Context**



# Proposed Site Plan

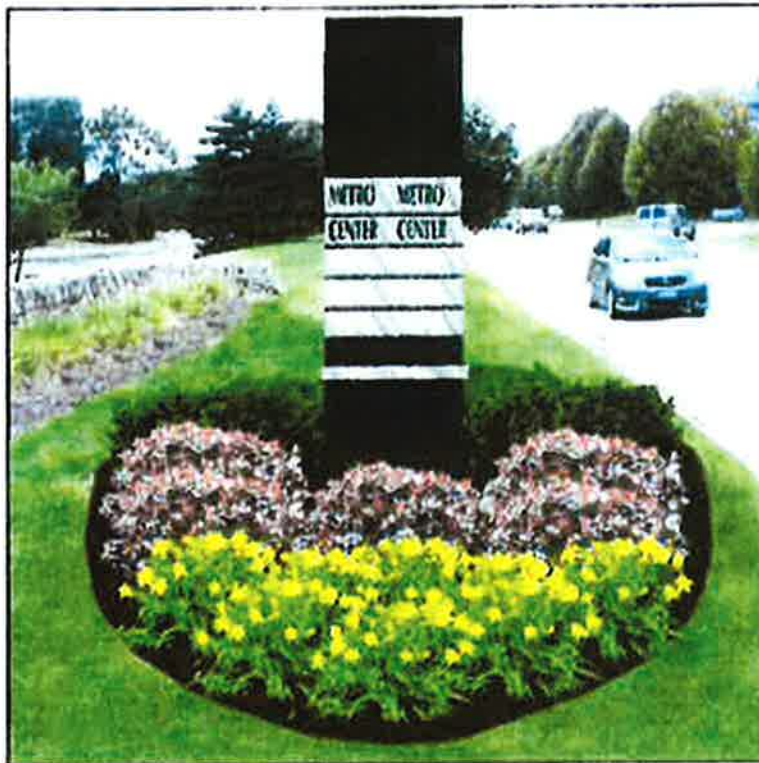


● Proposed Sign Locations

# Existing Signs



# Proposed Joint Identification Signs



Front

Signs 1 and 8



Back

# Proposed Directional Signs With Tenant Names



Front

Signs 2 and 7



Back

# Proposed Directional Signs



Front

Signs 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14



Back