



VILLAGE OF MORTON GROVE
APPEARANCE COMMISSION

Flickinger Municipal Center
6101 Capulina Avenue, Morton Grove, IL 60053

Tuesday, July 7, 2026 - 7:00 P.M.
AGENDA

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

June 2, 2026, Meeting of the Appearance Commission

III. **PUBLIC MEETING**

CASE **AC 26-09**

APPLICANT Hamid Akbari & Azar Khounani, Imagine MG LLC
Kids Academy Early Learning Center, Dehkhoda Educational Foundation
9233 Shermer Road, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053

LOCATION 9233 Shermer Road
Morton Grove, Illinois 60053
09-13-226-007-0000

PETITION Request for waivers to select sign requirements (Chapter 10-10) for the refacing of existing
monument signs

IV. **OTHER BUSINESS**

V. **CLOSE MEETING**

**MINUTES OF THE JUNE 2, 2026
MEETING OF THE MORTON GROVE APPEARANCE COMMISSION
MORTON GROVE VILLAGE HALL, 6101 CAPULINA AVENUE, MORTON GROVE, IL 60053**

Pursuant to proper notice in accordance with the Open Meetings Act, the regular meeting of the Appearance Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairperson Pietron, Ms. Kirchner called the roll.

Commissioners Present: Dahlberg, Manno, Minx, Pietron, and Zimmer

Commissioners Absent: Israel with notice

Village Staff Present: Zoe Heidorn, Director of Community and Economic Development
Anne Ryder Kirchner, Planner/Zoning Administrator, Secretary
Chuck Meyer, Village Administrator

Trustees Present: Minx and Thill

Chairman Pietron proceeded to seek approval of the June 5, 2026 minutes.

Commissioner Manno moved to approve the minutes. Commissioner Zimmer seconded the motion. Chairperson Pietron called for the vote.

Commissioner Block voting	abstain
Commissioner Dahlberg voting	aye
Commissioner Manno voting	aye
Commissioner Minx voting	aye
Commissioner Zimmer voting	aye
Chairperson Pietron voting	aye

Minutes approved (5-0)

Chairperson Pietron called for the case.

CASE: AC 26-08

APPLICANT: Village of Morton Grove, 6101 Capulina Avenue, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053

LOCATION: 6201 Dempster Street, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053

PETITION: Request for approval of an Appearance Certificate for building, signage, and landscape plans associated with case PC 26-07, a request for approval of a Special Use Permit for municipal buildings and governmental offices and other facilities in accordance with Sections 12-4-2:C and 12-4-3:D, a Minor Subdivision in accordance with Chapter 12-8, and a Vacation in accordance with Section 12-9-5 for the property commonly known as 6201 Dempster Street in Morton Grove, Illinois (PIN 10-20-104-040-0000, 10-20-104-041-0000, 10-20-104-003-0000, 10-20-104-004-0000, 10-20-104-005-0000, 10-20-104-006-0000, 10-20-104-007-0000, 10-20-104-021-0000, and 10-20-104-022-0000), all within a C-1 General Commercial District and an R-3 General Residence

District with waivers for accessory structures (Section 12-2-6), fences (Section 12-3-5), landscaping (Chapter 12-11), off-street parking (Chapter 12-7), and signage (Chapter 10-10)

Ms. Heidorn introduced the case. The project on the 1.62 acre site will expand the existing 37,800 sq. ft. office building by 13,422 sq. ft. for a combined 51,222 sq. ft. Village Hall and Police Department. Occupancy is expected in 2028. This allows for continuous Village operations at the current location.

She walked through the elevations and proposed materials. The addition will have face brick in Endicott Manganese Ironspot Smooth. This is a full bed brick that will be mounted on conventional construction concrete masonry unit or steel wall construction. Accents are black metal coping and an aluminum composite metal panels in aluminum color.

The landscape plan and requested waivers were presented. Native plants are proposed. The village commits to planting trees in nearby public rights-of-way as space allows. Ornamental metal fencing and Trex composite privacy fencing in a coordinating color is proposed for the police parking lot and along the adjoining single-family residences.

The signage plan requires a waiver as the primary sign face area exceeds the maximum. Ms. Heidorn noted the measuring methods and how the individual lettering is not as large as the calculated area.

Commissioner Block asked for the number of on-site parking spaces. There will be 93 spaces.

Chairman Pietron asked if the east elevation of the new addition could be softened as it faces residential buildings and is currently open spaced. Landscaping could be used.

Ms. Heidorn noted there is limited space with the police department gate. Ms. Gruener noted that two materials are proposed, the brick and the aluminum panels. Design options will be explored.

Mark Price and Louise Gruener of FGM Architects presented the goal of the design for both the Village Hall and Police Departments, and described the materials in more detail.

Parking lot lighting was discussed, it was noted that the lighting can be dimmed. They can dim by motion or by schedule.

The tree waiver was discussed, the site is unique as it has three frontages and the need for street parking.

Chairman Pietron asked if the sign needs to be in all capital letters, using lower case may be easier to read.

Chairman Pietron thanked Ms. Heidorn for the thorough presentation.

There was no public comment.

Commissioner Zimmer made a motion to approve Case AC 26-08, a request for approval of an Appearance Certificate for building plans associated with case PC 26-07, a request for approval of a Special Use Permit for municipal buildings and governmental offices and other facilities in accordance with Sections 12-4-2:C and 12-4-3:D, a Minor Subdivision in accordance with Chapter 12-8, and a Vacation in accordance with Section 12-9-5 for the property commonly known as 6201 Dempster Street in Morton Grove, Illinois, with waivers for accessory structures (Section 12-2-6), fences (Section 12-3-5), landscaping (Chapter 12-11), off-street parking (Chapter 12-7), and signage (Chapter 10-10). staff recommends the following conditions of approval:

1. Prior to filing any permit application, the applicant shall provide the Village with site plan and building specifications for review and approval. Site plan and building specifications must be deemed consistent with the approved materials and Appearance Commission discussion, as determined by the Director of Community and Economic Development and Appearance Commission Chairperson. If such designs are deemed to be inconsistent with the approved materials or discussion with the Appearance Commission, or are deemed to be of a lower quality than the approved materials, then the applicant will be required to file an application for an amendment to the Appearance Certificate.
2. The applicant shall submit a final landscape plan depicting final proposed plantings and related landscape improvements for review and approval by the Appearance Commission. The applicant shall install such plantings and related improvements prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy, unless otherwise approved by the Appearance Commission.
3. The applicant shall explore opportunities to break up the addition's blank wall areas along the east elevation through the incorporation of vertical landscaping, public art, architectural treatments, or similar design elements intended to enhance visual interest, subject to review and approval by the Director of Community and Economic Development.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Minx. Chairperson Pietron called for the vote.

Commissioner Block voting	aye
Commissioner Dahlberg voting	aye
Commissioner Manno voting	aye
Commissioner Minx voting	aye
Commissioner Zimmer voting	aye
Chairperson Pietron voting	aye

Motion passed (6-0)

Other Business

None

Commissioner Minx moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Manno. The motion to adjourn the meeting was approved unanimously pursuant to a voice vote at 7:25p.m.

Minutes by: Anne Ryder Kirchner

To: Chairperson Pietron and Members of the Appearance Commission

From: Zoe Heidorn, Director of Community and Economic Development
Anne Ryder Kirchner, Planner/Zoning Administrator

Date: June 30, 2026

Re: Appearance Commission Case AC 26-09
Request for waivers to select sign requirements (Chapter 10-10) for the refacing of existing monument signs at 9233 Shermer Road in Morton Grove, Illinois (09-13-226-007-0000)

Project Overview

Hamid Akbari and Azar Khounani on behalf of Imagine MG LLC, Kids Academy Early Learning Center, and Dehkhoda Educational Foundation ("applicant") filed a complete application requesting the Appearance Commission's review and approval of select waivers to Chapter 10-10 sign requirements to authorize (i) the installation of two new wall signs and (2) the refacing of two existing nonconforming monument signs at the property commonly known as 9233 Shermer Road, which is in an R-1 Single Family Residence District.

Subject Property

The subject property is a corner lot located on the north side of Church Street, between Shermer Road and Harlem Avenue. The property measures approximately 80,988 square feet (1.8 acres) in land area and has 784 feet of street frontage along Shermer Road and 466 feet along Harlem Avenue. To the north and east of the subject property are single-family residences also zoned R-1 Single Family Residence District. To the west are single-family residences zoned R-2 Single Family Residence. To the south of the subject property is an auto mechanic operating on property zoned C-2 Neighborhood Commercial District.

The applicant owns the subject property and operates a daycare center, Kids Academy Early Learning Center, in the northern portion of the principal structure. The daycare has been in operation since 1995. The southern portion of the structure was historically used as a house of worship by St. Luke's Christian Community Church and other church groups.



Subject Property Location Map

In 2023, the Village Board approved a Special Use Permit under Case PC 23-07, authorizing the continued operation of the existing daycare center and house of worship, as well as the addition of an educational institution operated by the not-for-profit Dehkhoda Educational Foundation. As part of this educational institution use, the Foundation operates the International Servant Leaders Museum. Because the house of worship is no longer operating at the property, the applicant proposes to install new wall signage for the public-facing museum and reface the existing monument signs to reflect the current daycare and museum uses on the site.

In 2022, the Appearance Commission approved an Appearance Certificate under Case AC 22-09, including waivers to permit the replacement of the sign panels on two nonconforming pylon signs to reflect the current Kids Academy branding. No changes are proposed to these existing signs, which are located on the northern portion of the property.

Application

The applicant is proposing to replace the faces of two existing nonconforming monument signs on the subject property, one located along the Harlem Avenue frontage, and one located along the Shermer Road frontage. A sign permit for past modification of the existing monument signage was identified in Village records, but the permit is undated. The existing

monument signs are nonconforming with respect to Chapter 10-10 requirements, and any modification to a nonconforming sign requires Appearance Commission review and approval.

Monument Signage Proposed & Applicable Requirements: Per Section 10-10-7:G, a monument sign in an R-1 District may not exceed 36 square feet in sign area (per side), may not exceed eight feet (8') in height, must be a minimum of 75 feet from any other ground monument or pylon sign, and may not be located less than eight feet (8') from any side lot line. A nonresidential property qualifies for one sign for each 150 square feet of frontage, up to a total of two (2) signs per property. All monument signs must be located in a landscape bed that extends at least two feet (2') from the base on all sides and is planted with shrubs at least three feet (3') in height at planting.

The existing monument signs proposed to be refaced are located along the east and west lot lines abutting Harlem Avenue and Shermer Road, respectively. The Shermer Road sign is proposed to be refaced with International Servant Leaders Museum signage on both sign faces, and the Harlem Avenue sign is proposed to be refaced with Kids Academy signage on both sign faces. The sign panel replacements will measure 73.75 inches (6.15 feet) in width by 46.25 inches (3.85 feet) in height, with a total sign area of 23.68 square feet per side. The overall sign height is less than eight feet (8').

The Shermer Road sign is located approximately 4.60 feet from the nearest public right-of-way, and the Harlem Avenue sign is located approximately 7.00 feet from the nearest public right-of-way. With two (2) existing additional pylon signs serving Kids Academy on the northern portion of the property and a total of four (4) pylon or monument signs on the property, the existing monument signs in question are nonconforming with respect to minimum setback from the nearest public right-of-way and the quantity of pylon or monument signs permitted on the property. Because no landscape bed currently exists for either monument sign, staff recommends the installation of a landscape bed that extends at least two feet (2') on all sides as a condition of approval.

Wall Signage Proposed & Applicable Requirements: The applicant proposes to install two (2) new wall signs at the main entrance to the International Servant Leaders Museum, which is along the west elevation facing Shermer Road. The sign above the entrance measures 168.00 inches (14.0 feet) wide by 19.00 inches (1.58 feet) high, for a total sign area of 22.12 square feet. The second sign, located immediately to the left of the entrance, measures 62.00 inches (5.17 feet) wide by 18.00 inches (1.50 feet) high, for a total sign area of 7.76 square feet. The total proposed new wall sign area is 29.88 square feet.

Kids Academy has an existing wall sign along the west elevation facing Shermer Road that measures approximately 140.00 inches (11.67 feet) in width by 53.80 inches (4.48 feet) in height, for a total existing wall sign area of 52.28 square feet. Per Section 10-10-7:F, nonresidential properties may have up to one and one-half (1.5) square feet of wall signage per each linear foot of frontage or one hundred twenty (120) square feet of signage (whichever is less). The property qualifies for up to 120 square feet in wall signage. In total, the applicant is proposing 82.16 square feet of total wall signage, which is less wall sign area than the maximum permitted.

The Appearance Commission may approve waivers to the technical requirements of Title 10, Chapter 10. For proposed signage, review shall be based on the standards established in Section 10-10-3:E. The following table compares the proposed monument signage with the Village's sign requirements for the R-1 Single Family Residence District, per Section 10-10 of the Municipal Code:

DIMENSIONAL CONTROL	CODE REQUIREMENT	PROPOSED	WAIVERS REQUESTED
Monument/Pylon Sign Quantity (Sec. 10-10-7:G.1)	One sign shall be allowed for each one hundred fifty feet (150') of street frontage up to a total of two (2) signs for a nonresidential property in the R-1 District	2 pylon signs + 2 monument signs = 4 signs total	<i>Waiver to allow 4 pylon/monument signs on the property</i>
Monument Sign Size (Sec. 10-10-7:G.1)	Max. 36 sq. ft. (per face)	23.68 sq. ft. (per face)	<i>Compliant</i>
Monument Sign Height (Sec. 10-10-7:G.1)	Max. 8 ft.	< 8 ft.	<i>Compliant</i>

Monument Sign Side Setback (Sec. 10-10-7:G.6)	Min. 8 ft. from side lot line	• 7.0 ft. from Shermer ROW • 4.6 ft. from Harlem ROW	• Waiver of 1.0 ft. to side setback along Shermer Road • Waiver of 3.4 ft. to side setback along Harlem Avenue
Monument Sign Separation (Sec. 10-10-7:G.6)	Min. 75 ft. from any other ground monument or pylon sign	> 75 ft. from any other ground monument or pylon sign	Compliant
Monument Sign Landscape Bed (Sec. 10-10-7:G.5)	Landscape bed depth min. 2 ft. from base with shrubs min. 3 ft. in height	No existing landscaping bed	Waiver needed - Staff recommends requirement for landscape bed depth min. 2 ft. from base

As outlined in the table above, the proposed pylon signage requires three (3) waivers to the following sections of the Morton Grove Municipal Code:

- Section 10-10-7:G.1 – A waiver to allow four (4) pylon or monument signs on a nonresidential property
- Section 10-10-7:G.6 – A waiver to the minimum required setback to allow setbacks of 4 feet from Harlem Avenue and 6 feet from Shermer Road.
- Section 10-10-7:G.5 – A waiver to allow no landscape beds surrounding the existing monument signs – Staff recommends a minimum two-foot (2') landscape bed surrounding the existing signs as a condition of approval.

Staff notes that the wall signs proposed to be installed along the west face of the building meet applicable Village Code requirements and can be administratively approved by staff.

Discussion

Considering that the applicant's request is for the refacing of existing monument signage that has been installed since 2002 or before based on historical Google aerial imagery, that the property has approximately 1,040 linear feet of street frontage, and that the four (4) standalone signs will provide clear direction and identity for two (2) independently operating uses on the site, staff has no concerns relating to this application. A 1984 plat of survey indicates that the monument sign along Shermer Road, or a similar sign located in approximately the same location, existed as early as that year.

Staff recommends, as a condition of approval, that a landscape bed measuring at least two feet (2') from all sides of the signs' bases be installed and maintained in perpetuity. The landscape bed shall be planted with live landscaping that is properly maintained and kept free of weeds, dead plant material, and other debris to ensure the monument signs remain an attractive feature for the neighborhood.

The Sign Variance Standards (Sec. 10-10-3:E) established in the Code are as follows:

1. *In the opinion of the appearance commission the proposed sign displays a level of creativity which might not be achieved if strict adherence to the technical requirements of this chapter were imposed; or*
2. *There are special circumstances unique to the property that would create practical difficulties if the technical requirement of this chapter were imposed. By way of example, but not by way of limitation, such circumstances include the size, shape, topography, location or surroundings affecting the property; however,*
3. *Under no circumstances may a sign be approved if the proposed sign violates the standards set forth in subsection D2 or D3 of this section. (See below)*
4. *The appearance commission may approve and amend a sign plan for a building or development with multiple tenants. Upon such approval, the village administrator shall approve all signs for such building or developments which conform to said plan without further design review by the appearance commission.*

As referenced in Section 10-10-3:E, the standards established in subsections D2 and D3 are as follows:

- D. *Standards For Permit Approval: The village administrator shall approve an application if all of the following standards have been met or can be met with conditions as may be included in a conditional approval:*

2. *The sign as proposed does not violate any other applicable code provisions and/or standards of the village of Morton Grove, state of Illinois, or federal government; and*
3. *The sign will not:*
 - a. *Cause substantial injury to the value of other properties in the vicinity, or*
 - b. *Be detrimental to the public safety or welfare in the neighborhood where it is located, or*
 - c. *Unreasonably impair the visibility to adjacent property or public right of way, or*
 - d. *Be inconsistent with any approved plan for the building or the district or area where it is located, or*
 - e. *Be inconsistent with other signs on the property, or with the architectural character of the building, or*
 - f. *Alter the essential character of the neighborhood, or*
 - g. *Violate the purpose, spirit, or intent of this code.*

Recommendation

If the Appearance Commission makes a motion to approve the request for waivers to select sign requirements at 9233 Shermer Road, staff recommends the following motion and conditions of approval:

Motion to approve Case AC 26-09, a request for waivers to select sign requirements at 9233 Shermer Road in Morton Grove, Illinois, subject to the following conditions:

1. A landscape bed measuring at least two feet (2') from all sides of the signs' bases shall be installed and maintained in perpetuity. The landscape beds shall be planted with live landscaping that is properly maintained and kept free of weeds, dead plant material, and other debris, subject to review and approval by the Director of Community and Economic Development



Incredibly Close ✨ Amazingly Open

Appearance Commission Application

Village of Morton Grove Department of Community & Economic Development

6101 Capulina Avenue, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053 | 847-663-3063 | commdev@mortongroveil.org

Case Number: AC 26-09 Date Application Filed: 05/28/2026

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Applicant Name: Hamid Akbari and Azar Khounani via Imagine MG LLC

Applicant Address: 1809 Admiral Court, Glenview IL

Applicant City / State / Zip Code: 60053

Applicant Phone: (224)628-1757 Mobil / Other: (847)30-9776

Applicant Email: hamidneiu@gmail.com

Applicant Legal Interest in Property (Owner, Tenant, Etc.): Owners

Applicant Signature: Hamid Akbari Azar Khounani

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Common Address of Property: 9233 Shermer Road, Morton Grove, IL 60053

Property Identification Number (PIN): 09-13-226-007-0000

Zoning District: Special Use Property's Current Use: Childcare, Educational Foundation/Museum

APPLICANT'S REQUEST (ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS AS NECESSARY):

1. Applicant is requesting Appearance Commission approval for the following:

Replacing Existing Signage for St. Luke's with Outdoor Signage for Kids Academy on the Harlem Side, and Signage for the International Servant Leaders Museum
on the Shermer Side And, replacing temporary by the entrance door signage with a permanent one for the Museum.

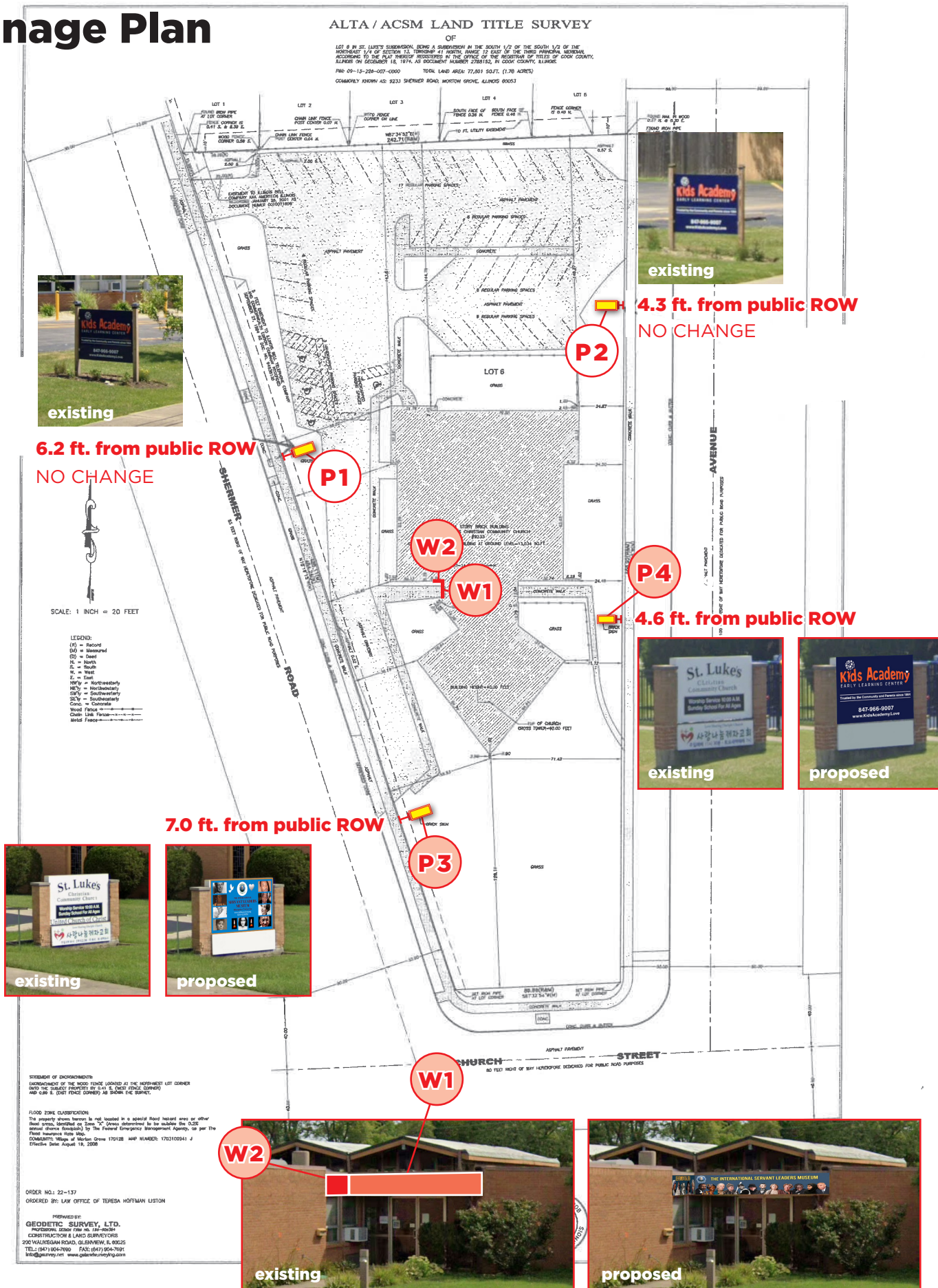
2. Provide detailed information to explain the reason for the request (attach additional sheets as necessary):

Entrance Door on the Shermer Side Signage: 168 by 19 inches and 6 by 18 inches metal signage (please see the image of the signage attached)

Kids Academy Signage replacing the current signage of the St. Luke's Church on the Harlem Side. Size: 46.25 by 73.75 inches see the attached image

The Museum Signage to replace the current signage of the St. Luke's Church on the Shermer Side: 46.25 by 73.75 inches, see the attached image

9233 Shermer Road Signage Plan



9233 Shermer Road Signage Plan

P3



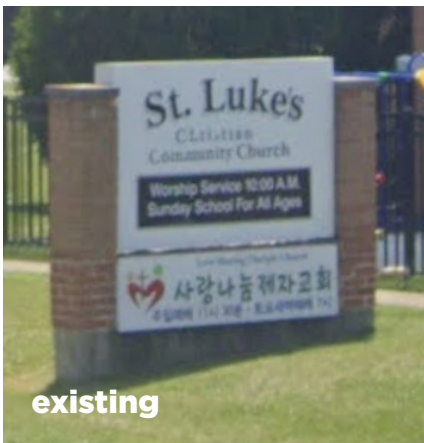
existing



proposed

73.75" w x 46.25" h
per face, two faces

P4



existing



proposed

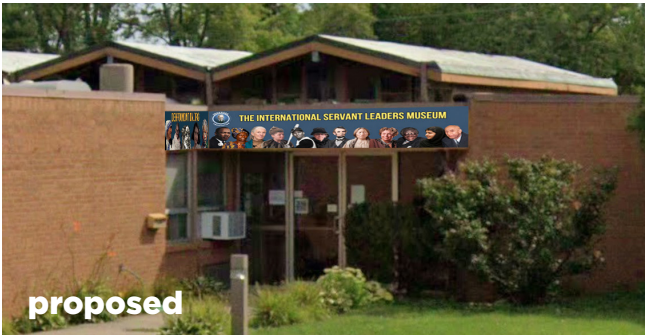
73.75" w x 46.25" h
per face, two faces

W1

W2



existing



proposed

W1: 168.00" w x 19.00" h
W2: 62.00" w x 18.00" h

9233 Shermer Road
Signage Plan



P3 73.75" w x 46.25" h
per face, two faces



P4 73.75" w x 46.25" h
per face, two faces



W1 168.00" w x 19.00" h



W2 62.00" w x 18.00" h