



**DATE:** June 7, 2023

**TO:** Planning Commission Chair and Commissioners

**FROM:** Jessica Jagoe, Community Development Director

**SUBJECT:** **Planning Case #23-010 – No Public Hearing Required**  
**Applicant:** New Horizon Academy  
**Property Location:** 4001 Lexington Avenue N.  
**Request:** Sign Standard Adjustment (Site Plan Review)

Budgeted Amount:	Actual Amount:	Funding Source:
N/A	N/A	N/A

**Requested Action**

New Horizon Academy (“The Applicant”) has submitted a land use application for a Sign Standard Adjustment through the Site Plan Review process for the property located at 4001 Lexington Avenue N. (“Subject Property”). The Applicant is proposing to amend the Land O’Lakes Master Sign Plan approved in 2018 to include a third freestanding sign within the corporate campus. The Applicant is seeking flexibility through the Site Plan Review process as a sign standard adjustment to allow an additional freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue.

**Background**

**1. Overview of Request**

The Applicant has submitted a land use application for a Site Plan Review, seeking flexibility on the number and size of freestanding monument signs allowed for the Subject Property. New Horizon Academy is located within Building C on the Land O’Lakes corporate campus. The campus consists of 47 acres that is developed with three buildings and two parking lots. The Subject Property has road frontage along County Road F West and Lexington Avenue. As part of the headquarter campus expansion in 2018, Land O’Lakes began partnering with New Horizon Academy to provide onsite childcare to their employees. Since 2020, New Horizon Academy has seen a decline in enrollment with many campus employees continuing to work full-time from home. As a result, the two parties have agreed to allow for open enrollment of childcare services to non-employees.

The Applicant is seeking flexibility to install an additional single-tenant freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue in order to advertise their childcare facility to the community. As part of this application, the existing monument sign along County Road F will be refaced to include the New Horizon Academy name and updated Land O’Lakes logo. No other changes are proposed to existing signage that was approved in 2018 as part of the Master Sign Plan.

## 2. Master Sign Plan Background

In 2018, the City Council approved Planning Case #18-027—a Sign Standard Adjustment for a deviation from the sign code to increase the permitted size of the freestanding monument and auxiliary signs on the Subject Property. The Master Sign Plan includes four (4) auxiliary signs. Two (2) auxiliary signs are located internal to the corporate campus and two (2) are located at the far eastern and western access points adjacent to County Road F. The Applicant is not proposing any changes to the auxiliary signs as part of this application. Then there are two (2) approved monument signs that are located along abutting roadways (i.e. County Road F and Lexington Avenue).

Under the Master Sign Plan, the Subject Property is allowed two freestanding monument signs each with a total sign area of up to 60 square feet and a sign copy area not to exceed 22.5 square feet. Flexibility was also granted to allow up to 25 square feet of auxiliary/directional signage on both monuments that is not to be deducted from the maximum sign copy area allowed. Additionally, all freestanding signs on the Subject Property are to be externally illuminated. For clarification between these two terms, “sign area” is defined as the area encompassing the sign face and sign structure, whereas “sign copy area” is defined as the area around the words or graphics on the sign.

## 3. Site Data

<b>Future Land Use Plan:</b>	Light Industrial and Office
<b>Existing Land Use:</b>	Office and Daycare Facility
<b>Zoning:</b>	I-1 District
<b>Size:</b>	47.00 Acres

Direction	Future Land Use Plan	Zoning	Existing Land Use
North	I/O – Light Industrial and Office	I-1 – Limited Industrial District	COM – Day Care Facility OFC – Office ULT – Utility
South	ROW – Right-of-Way	ROW – Right-of-Way	ROW – Right-of-Way
East	Mixed Use - City of Shoreview	PUD – Planned Unit Development City of Shoreview	Mixed Use Office and High Density Residential – City of Shoreview
West	HDR – High Density Residential UTL - Utility	I-1 – Limited Industrial District R-4 – Multiple Dwelling District	MF – Multiple Family ULT – Utility

#### 4. Existing Conditions

The Applicant, New Horizon Academy, is located in Building C on the Subject Property shown below which is part of the Land O'Lakes Corporate Headquarters. There are three buildings on the corporate campus. The Subject Property located in the I-1 Zoning District and is part of Sign District 6. Sign District 6 allows for freestanding signs with a maximum sign copy area of 45 square feet. All of the Sign Districts allow an additional freestanding sign on properties abutting more than one public street. If that were the case, each additional freestanding sign may not exceed half the size of the maximum sign area allowed for a freestanding sign in the underlying sign district. For the Subject Property, the maximum sign copy area allowed for an additional freestanding sign would be 22.5 square feet.

All of the auxiliary and freestanding signs as approved under the 2018 Master Sign Plan have been installed on the Subject Property. As part of this sign proposal, the Applicant is requesting to install a second nonilluminated freestanding monument sign along Lexington Avenue with up to 11.68 square feet of sign copy area and a total sign area of 33.36 square feet that includes directional signage. The proposed freestanding monument sign would be located 244 feet north of the existing Land O'Lakes sign.

*Aerial Map of Subject Property*



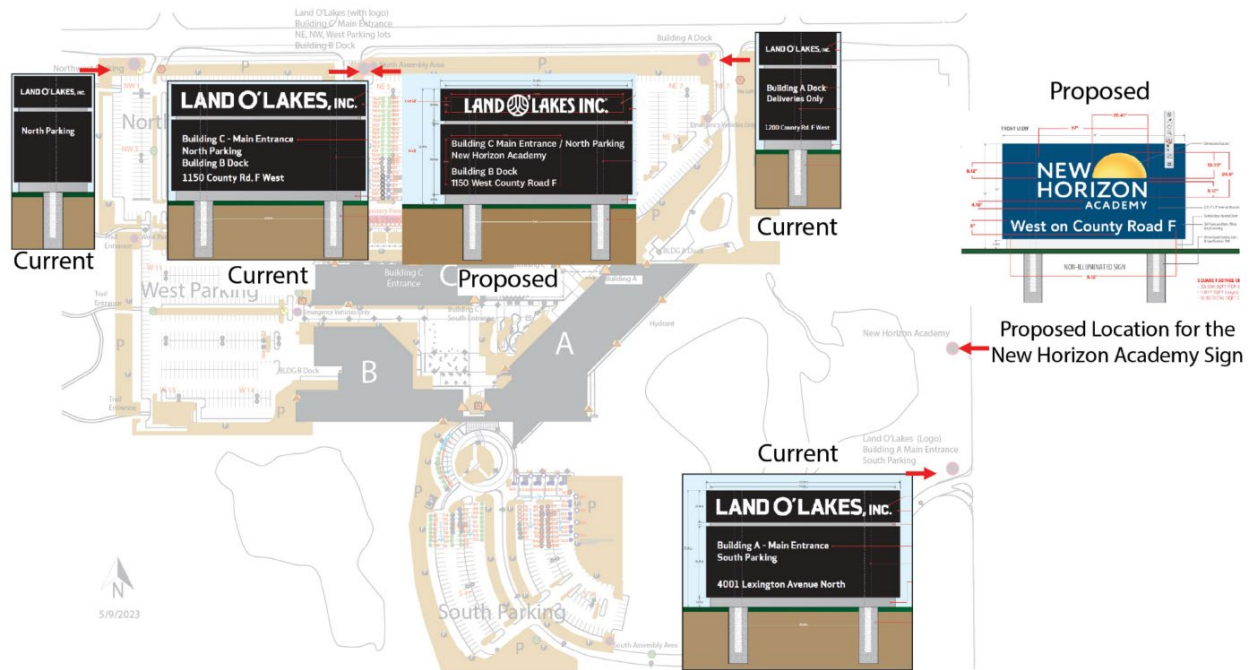
#### Approvals

##### 1. Site Plan Review

The Applicant is proposing to construct a nonilluminated freestanding monument sign with up to 12 (i.e. rounding 11.68) square feet of sign copy area on the east side of the Subject Property. This would be the third freestanding sign on the Subject Property. To construct this freestanding

sign, the Applicant is looking for flexibility from the City Code, Chapter 12 – Sign Code through the Site Plan Review process. Sign Standard Adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area, and/or location of a sign or signs established by this Chapter may be approved with a Site Plan Review or a Planned Unit Development process as described for in Section 1320 and 1355 of the Zoning Code. Sign District 6, applicable to the Subject Property, allows for one freestanding sign along each public street that the property abuts.

Site Plan of Existing and Proposed Signage



**Plan Evaluation**

**Chapter 12, Sign Code Review**

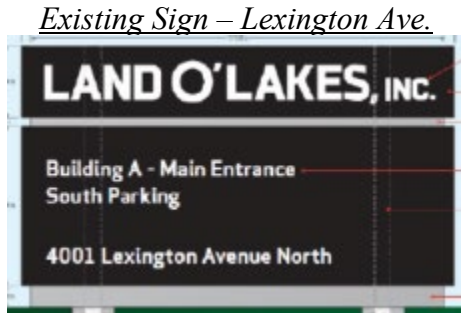
**A. Sign Standards by Sign District – Section 1240.02, Subd. 2 – Freestanding Pole or Monument Signs**

*1. Number of Freestanding Signs – Flexibility Requested*

Sign District 6 allows no more than one freestanding sign on any site except in cases where properties front more than one public street. For properties that front more than one public street, an additional freestanding sign may be permitted for each street front provided that each additional freestanding sign does not exceed half the size of the maximum sign area allowed for a freestanding sign in the underlying sign district.

The Subject Property shall be permitted two (2) freestanding signs since there is direct road frontage along County Road F and Lexington avenue. Under this application, the Applicant is proposing a third freestanding sign on the Subject Property. The proposed sign would be the second freestanding monument sign on the east side of the property along Lexington Avenue. The

Applicant is requesting to amend the Master Sign Plan to allow for the installation of a single-tenant sign for each occupant on the Subject Property rather than a combined multi-tenant sign. The Applicant’s narrative states “having a combined sign on Lexington Avenue would create confusion as there would be an assumption that is the entrance to New Horizon Academy”.



**2. Size of Freestanding Signs - Copy Area – Flexibility Requested**

Sign District 6 allows freestanding signs up to 12 feet in height with a sign copy area of no more than 45 square feet. An additional freestanding sign in Sign District 6 would have a maximum sign copy area allowed of up to 22.5 square feet.

The proposed freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue is 4.67 feet in height and includes a sign copy area of 11.69 square feet. The sizing of the proposed freestanding monument sign complies with the size requirements for Sign District 6 for an additional freestanding sign. However, due to the request for flexibility to allow a third freestanding monument sign, staff also asks the Planning Commission to take into consideration the size of the proposed freestanding sign as part of this review. The proposed freestanding monument sign for New Horizon Academy will be about half the size of the previously approved signage for the Subject Property.

As part of this application, Land O’Lakes has indicated they will be refacing the existing freestanding monument sign along County Road F. The purpose of the reface is to update the Land O’Lakes logo and to provide directional text for New Horizon Academy location in Building C. For this sign, the Applicant is not requesting any changes to the flexibility of sign area that was approved in 2018 for the Subject Property. The proposed changes as illustrated in the attachments would comply with the previously approved Master Sign Plan.

<b>Freestanding Monument Location:</b>	<b>Freestanding Monument Sign Area</b>	<b>Freestanding Monument Sign Copy Area</b>	<b>Freestanding Monument Directional Copy Area</b>
Lexington Ave – Land O’Lakes	60 sf	22.5 sf	25 sf
Proposed Lexington Ave – New Horizon Academy	34 sf	12 sf	5 sf
County Road F	60 sf	22.5 sf	25 sf

**3. Location of Freestanding Signs – Meets Requirements**

Freestanding signs shall be located at least five (5) feet from any property line and shall not project over the property line. The proposed freestanding monument sign for New Horizon Academy will be located in alignment with the existing Land O’Lakes sign along Lexington Avenue. The

Applicant is proposing the two signs would be spaced approximately 244 feet apart. It should be noted that the existing Land O'Lakes freestanding sign is approximately 355 feet from the property line directly to the north. The site plan provided by the Applicant does not specify the distance of the proposed freestanding sign from either property line. However, the Applicant is not seeking flexibility from setbacks for the placement of the proposed freestanding monument sign. If approved, city staff will verify compliance with setbacks as part of the issuance of a future sign permit and upon final inspection. Planning staff has included a draft recommended condition for the Planning Commission to consider for setback compliance as part of this review.

### **B. Sign Standard Adjustments – Section 1260.01**

The Applicant requests flexibility for the number and size of signs in order to allow the proposed freestanding monument sign to be included as part of the Master Sign Plan for the Subject Property. City Code Section 1260.01, Sign Standard Adjustments states “adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area, and/or location of a sign or signs established by this Chapter may be approved with a Site Plan Review or a Planned Unit Development process.” In order to approve an adjustment, the Planning Commission will need to make a determination that the following criteria in the sign code has been satisfied:

1. Subd. 1 There are site conditions which require a sign adjustment to allow the sign to be reasonably visible from a street immediately adjacent to the site.

*According to the Applicant, New Horizon Academy, is seeking a Sign Standard Adjustment for a second monument sign along Lexington Avenue to distinguish the entrances to the Land O'Lakes campus and redirect New Horizon Academy clients to the entrance off of County Road F. Within the corporate campus, New Horizon Academy is located in Building C which is located off of County Road F. For safety and convenience, Land O'Lakes has a designated drop-off/pick-up location in front off Building C. The Applicant has stated that a multi-tenant combined freestanding sign would create confusion with the Lexington Avenue driveway access being identified as an entrance to New Horizon Academy. The intent of the second freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue is to make it more apparent of separate uses to redirect parents to County Road F.*

2. Subd. 2 The sign adjustment will allow a sign of exceptional design or a style that will enhance the area or that is more consistent with the architecture and design of the site.

*According to the Applicant's narrative, the existing monument sign along County Road F will be refaced to include New Horizon Academy's name and the updated logo for Land O'Lakes. In the future, all other signs along County Road F and Lexington Avenue will also be updated with the new Land O'Lakes logo. The proposed freestanding sign will have a smaller sign face and is consistent with Sign District 6 standards. The New Horizon Academy freestanding sign will feature a silver painted skirted base to maintain design consistency with the Land O'Lakes freestanding sign along Lexington Avenue.*

3. Subd. 3 The sign adjustment will not result in a sign that is inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning district in which the property is located or the current land use.

*According to the Applicant, all proposed freestanding signs, are consistent with the purpose of the I-1 District and have met the criteria of the sign code for a sign standard adjustment.*

#### ***1355.04 Procedural Requirements for Specific Applications***

Section 1355.04, Subd. 5 of the Arden Hills Zoning Code states that a public hearing is not required for Site Plan Review, but neighboring property owners shall be notified. Notification was prepared in accordance with City policy.

#### **Additional Review**

##### *Ramsey County*

Ramsey County has reviewed the plans and has no additional comments at this time.

#### **Findings of Fact**

The Planning Commission must make a finding as to whether or not the proposed application would adversely affect the surrounding neighborhood, or the community as a whole based on the aforementioned factors. City Staff offers the following findings for consideration:

1. The Subject Property is located in the I-1 Zoning District and is guided as Light Industrial and Office in the Land Use Plan.
2. In Sign District 6, one additional freestanding sign is permitted up to 22.5 square feet in area and 12 feet in height for properties that front more than one public street.
3. In 2018, the Subject Property was approved a sign standard adjustment for the permitted size of the freestanding monument and auxiliary signs as part of a Master Sign Plan through the Site Plan Review process.
4. The Applicant has submitted an application for Site Plan Review to allow a third freestanding sign for the Subject Property which would be the second freestanding sign located along the east property line adjacent to Lexington Avenue.
5. Sign Standard Adjustments to the requirements and standards for the height, number, type, lighting, area, and/or location of a sign or signs established by this Chapter may be approved with a Site Plan Review or a Planned Unit Development process as described for in Section 1320 and 1355 of the Zoning Code.
6. Flexibility through the Site Plan Review process has been requested for the number and size of freestanding signs allowed on the Subject Property.
7. The proposed additional freestanding monument sign would be consistent with the size and design of the existing signage approved as part of the Master Sign Plan for the Subject Property.
8. The proposed signage plan does not conflict with the general purpose and intent of the I-1 Zoning District or the Comprehensive Development Plan for the City.
9. The application is not anticipated to create a negative impact on the immediate area or the community as a whole.

10. The proposed plan will not produce any permanent noise, odors, vibration, smoke, dust, air pollution, heat, liquid, or solid waste, and other nuisance characteristics.
11. A public hearing is not required for Site Plan Review.

### **Proposed Motion Language**

Staff has provided the following options and motion language for this case.

1. **Recommend Approval with Conditions:** Motion to recommend *approval* of Planning Case 23-010 for Site Plan Review at 4001 Lexington Avenue N., based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans, as amended by the conditions in the June 7, 2023, Report to the Planning Commission:
  - 1) That the project shall be completed in accordance with the plans submitted. Any significant changes to these plans, as determined by the Community Development Director, shall require review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council.
  - 2) A separate sign permit shall be required for all proposed signage.
  - 3) All signage shall meet all other requirements of Sign District 6.
  - 4) All freestanding signs shall be externally illuminated in accordance with the Master Sign Plan.
  - 5) Prior to issuance of a sign permit for the New Horizon Academy freestanding monument sign, the Applicant shall stake the location of the proposed new sign adjacent to Lexington Avenue. Planning staff shall approve the location meets the minimum setback of 5 feet from any property line prior to installation.
2. **Recommend Approval as Submitted:** Motion to recommend *approval* of Planning Case 23-010 for Site Plan Review at 4001 Lexington Avenue N., based on the findings of fact and the submitted plans in the June 7, 2023 Report to the Planning Commission.
3. **Recommend Denial:** Motion to recommend *denial* of Planning Case 23-010 for Site Plan Review at 4001 Lexington Avenue N., based on the following findings of fact: *findings to deny should specifically reference the reasons for denial.*
4. **Table:** Motion to *table* Planning Case 23-010 for Site Plan Review at 4001 Lexington Avenue N.: *a specific reason and/or information request should be included with a motion to table.*

### **Public Notice and Comments**

Staff published a notice in the *Pioneer Press* as per City procedure on May 25, 2023. Public notices were mailed out on May 25, 2023. The mailing was sent to neighbors within 500 feet of the subject parcel. No comments have been received regarding this application as of June 1, 2023.

### **Deadline for Agency Actions**

The City of Arden Hills received the completed application for this request on May 19, 2023. Pursuant to Minnesota State Statute, the City must act on this request by July 17, 2023 (60 days),



unless the City provides the petitioner with written reasons for an additional 60-day review period. The sixty (60) day timeline begins on the day the City is in receipt of what has been determined to be a complete application. With consent of the applicant, the City may extend the review period beyond the initial 120 days.

**Attachments**

- A. Land Use Application
- B. Location Map
- C. Applicant Narrative
- D. Amended Master Sign Plan