

**VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS  
ORDINANCE 2025-105**

**AN ORDINANCE APPROVING VARIATIONS FROM CHAPTER 19, SIGNS, OF  
THE VERNON HILLS VILLAGE CODE, FOR BAXTER CREDIT UNION  
300-340 N. MILWAUKEE AVENUE**

**WHEREAS**, North Shore Sign Company, on behalf of Baxter Credit Union, has submitted a petition for a variation from Chapter 19, Signs, of the Vernon Hills code, to permit a freestanding electronic message center (automatic changing copy sign) on the property located at 300 N. Milwaukee Avenue, legally described in **Exhibit A**; and

**WHEREAS**, the existing sign includes a message center, and was approved through Ordinance 2013-021; and

**WHEREAS**, the petitioner wishes to replace the sign and locate the new sign closer to the intersection that customers would use to access the property; and

**WHEREAS**, the Planning and Zoning Commission of the Village of Vernon Hills conducted a public hearing, duly noticed, on August 27, 2025; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission, after consideration of the materials and testimony provided by the petitioner, has filed a report making findings of fact in support of the petition in accordance with the standards listed in Section 21.5 of the Zoning Ordinance, and has recommended approval of the petition as described in **Exhibit B** (Planning and Zoning Commission report); and

**WHEREAS**, the Board of Trustees, at its meeting on September 16, 2025, reviewed the recommendation of the Planning and Zoning Commission, and finds that sufficient facts have been presented which, in its judgment, justify approval of the sign code variations referenced herein.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS, COUNTY OF LAKE AND STATE OF ILLINOIS:**

**SECTION 1. Incorporation.** The above listed recitals are incorporated into and made part of this Ordinance.

**SECTION 2. Variation Approval.** A variation from the requirements of Chapter 19, Signs, of the Vernon Hills Village Code, Section 19-5 Exempt Signs, Subsection 8, to permit an electronic message center (automatic changing copy sign), otherwise restricted to government entities, for the property located at 300-340 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Vernon Hills, Illinois (legally described in **Exhibit A**), in accordance with Section 21 (Variations) of the Zoning Code, as described in the application by North Shore Sign Company, dated July 25, 2025, is hereby approved.

### **SECTION 3. Plans**

The variation granted in Section 2 of this Ordinance is described in the application by North Shore Sign Company, dated July 25, 2025, with the sign and sign are to be constructed substantially in accordance with the following plans, attached in **Exhibit C**:

- Job Narrative
- Plat describing minimum setback from property line
- Sign design drawing, North Shore Sign, last revised July 30, 2025
- Landscape plan, dated July 30, 2025, last revised September 5, 2025

### **SECTION 4. Conditions of Approval**

The variation granted in Section 2 of this Ordinance is subject to the following conditions of approval:

1. The LED display shall include a photocell to dim the screen at night.
2. Images shall be displayed for a minimum of five (5) seconds.
3. Features that would not comply with other sections of the sign code, such as strobe effects, shall be disabled.
4. The existing sign shall be removed and the area shall be restored with topsoil and seeded within thirty (30) days of the new sign becoming operational.
5. Natural hardwood mulch shall be used in the landscape bed.
6. The sign base and/or landscaping shall be configured to ensure the text is visible above the plantings.

**SECTION 5. SEVERABILITY.** In the event that any section, clause, provision, or part of this ordinance shall be found and determined to be invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, all valid parts that are severable from the invalid parts shall remain in full force and effect. If any part of this ordinance is found to be invalid in any one or more of its several applications, all valid applications that are severable from the invalid applications shall remain in effect.

**SECTION 6. REPEAL AND SAVINGS CLAUSE.** All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are hereby repealed; provided, however, that nothing herein contained shall affect any rights, actions or causes of action which shall have accrued to the Village of Vernon Hills prior to the effective date of this ordinance.

**SECTION 7. SUCCESSORS AND ASSIGNS.** All of the provisions of this Ordinance and the attachments hereto are binding on all successors and assigns of the petitioner and property owner.

**SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATE.** This ordinance shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage, approval and publication as provided by law.

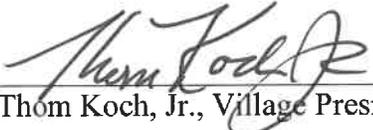
**SECTION 9. ORDINANCE NUMBER.** This ordinance shall be known as Ordinance Number 2025-105.

Adopted by roll call vote as follows:

AYES: 7 – Marquardt, Oppenheim, Takaoka, Forster, Schenk, Lundeen, Koch

NAYS: 0 - None

ABSENT AND NOT VOTING: 0 - None

  
Thom Koch, Jr., Village President

PASSED: 09/16/2025

APPROVED: 09/16/2025

ATTEST: 09/16/2025

  
Kevin Timony, Village Clerk



**EXHIBIT A**

**Legal Description**

**300-340 N. Milwaukee Avenue**

**PARCEL 1 (300 N. MILWAUKEE AVE):**

LOTS 53 THROUGH 56, BOTH INCLUSIVE, IN CONTINENTAL EXECUTIVE PARKE RESUBDIVISION NO. 11, BEING A RESUBDIVISION OF LOTS 4 AND 8 IN CONTINENTAL EXECUTIVE PARKE PHASE 1, BEING A PART OF THE WEST HALF OF SECTION 3 AND THE EAST HALF OF SECTION 4, TOWNSHIP 43 NORTH, RANGE 11, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED SEPTEMBER 23, 1994 AS DOCUMENT NO. 3595413 IN LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

PIN: 15-03-302-030

**PARCEL 2 (340 N. MILWAUKEE AVE.):**

LOTS 32 THROUGH 52, BOTH INCLUSIVE, IN CONTINENTAL EXECUTIVE PARKE RESUBDIVISION NO. 11, BEING A RESUBDIVISION OF LOTS 4 AND 8 IN CONTINENTAL EXECUTIVE PARKE PHASE 1, BEING A PART OF THE WEST HALF OF SECTION 3 AND THE EAST HALF OF SECTION 4, TOWNSHIP 43 NORTH, RANGE 11, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED SEPTEMBER 23, 1994 AS DOCUMENT NO. 3595413 IN LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

PIN: 15-03-302-029

**EXHIBIT B**

**Planning and Zoning Commission**  
**Findings of Fact and Recommendation**

Case 2025-11: Sign Variation

Baxter Credit Union (BCU)  
300-340 N. Milwaukee Avenue

**Planning and Zoning Commission – Meeting Minutes**  
**August 27, 2025 - 7:30 p.m.**

**I. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Director Jennings called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Attendance: Commissioners Cotton, Fluno, Lis, and Nabat were present. Chairman Morris and Commissioners Heidner and Smith had given prior notice of their absence.

Also attending: Andrew Jennings, Director of Community Development.

Director Jennings requested a motion nominating a Chair Pro-tem for the meeting. Commissioner Fluno made a motion nominating Commissioner Cotton to serve as Chair Pro-tem for the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nabat.

AYES: Fluno, Lis, Nabat, Cotton

NAYS:

ABSENT: Heidner, Morris, Smith

PRESENT:

Motion approved (4-0, 3 absent).

**II. General Public Comment**

No one from the public came forward to speak.

**III. Items for Review**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton Morris called for the opening of the following public hearing:

1. **Public Hearing for Case #2025-11.** A petition filed by North Shore Sign Company on behalf of Baxter Credit Union, property owner, requesting a variation from the requirements of Chapter 19, Signs, per Section 21.5 of the Zoning Code.

**ALL PERSONS PROVIDING TESTIMONY WERE SWORN IN**

Matt Laska, North Shore Sign Company, and Zeke Hellenbrand, Baxter Credit Union (BCU), were present and sworn in.

Mr. Laska provided a description of the proposal. The existing sign near the middle of the BCU campus would be demolished and rebuilt near the corner of CDW Way and Milwaukee Avenue. The new sign would be similar to the existing sign. The message center would be a Watchfire unit and BCU would be able to control features such as brightness and duration of messages. It will have a photocell to automatically dim the unit at night. The BCU text area will be push-

through lettering so only the text will be illuminated. They plan to relocate as much of the existing landscaping as possible.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton requested Staff comments. Director Jennings referred to the Staff report. The draft motion is based somewhat on the original variation with conditions to limit the functionality of the sign. The suggested refresh rate of 5 seconds could be adjusted by the Commission if needed. Staff had reviewed the minutes from the original hearing. The CDW sign was the only similar sign at that time. The Village ultimately approved the BCU sign with restrictions. The new variation is required because the original variation refers specifically to the current location.

### **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton noted that the responses to the Standards for a Variance in 21.5 had been provided in the staff report and were part of the record.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated that public notice had been provided as described in the Staff report. Director Jennings confirmed that no comments had been received.

### **COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Lis asked whether BCU was still a non-profit credit union. Mr. Hellenbrand confirmed that they are.

Commissioner Lis asked about the difference between the existing and proposed screens. Mr. Laska explained the new screen is higher resolution and has more capabilities. It's the same unit that the Village uses in its signs.

Commissioner Lis asked if it could display photos. Mr. Laska confirmed it was capable of photos and videos with different software but this version would allow moving graphics like waving flags.

Mr. Hellenbrand added that the intention is to display static messages like the sample in the packet. The purpose is to help people understand what BCU is; it can be confused with a university.

Commissioner Lis questioned whether the sign would block visibility at the intersection. Mr. Hellenbrand stated it is set far back and wouldn't impact sight lines.

Commissioner Fluno agreed that the relocation made sense. He noted that the landscape plan didn't include much winter interest. He recommended low shrubs, evergreens, and low flowering shrubs so there is more visible material year-round. He also recommended natural mulch, and raising the base to ensure the text would be visible above the plants. Mr. Hellenbrand agreed with the suggestions.

## **THE HEARING WAS OPENED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton opened the hearing to public comment. No one from the public was present to speak, and public comment was closed.

## **DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATION**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated that there is a standing motion to approve and referred to the draft motion from the staff report to recommend approval of a variation from the sign code. She noted the additional conditions of approval relating to landscaping.

Director Jennings suggested that the final condition be phrased to allow the petitioner the flexibility to adjust the base or the landscaping to ensure the text is visible.

Commission Lis seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the Commission voted on the motion as follows:

**Make Findings of Fact and Recommend Approval of a variation from Chapter 19, Signs, Section 19-5 Exempt Signs, Subsection 8, to permit an electronic message center otherwise restricted to government entities, for the property located at 300-340 N. Milwaukee Avenue, Vernon Hills, Illinois, per by Section 21 (Variations) of the Zoning Code, as described in the application by North Shore Sign Company, on behalf of Baxter Credit Union, dated July 25, 2025, and in accordance with the following exhibits:**

- Job Narrative
- Sign design drawing, North Shore Sign, last revised July 30, 2025
- Landscape plan, dated July 30, 2025

And with the following conditions of approval:

1. The LED display shall include a photocell to dim the screen at night.
2. Images shall be displayed for a minimum of five (5) seconds.
3. Features that would not comply with other sections of the sign code, such as strobe effects, shall be disabled.
4. The existing sign shall be removed and the area shall be restored with topsoil and seeded within thirty (30) days of the new sign becoming operational.
5. Natural hardwood mulch shall be used in the landscape bed.
6. The sign base and/or landscaping shall be configured to ensure the text is visible above the plantings.

AYES: Lis, Fluno, Nabat, Cotton

NAYS:

ABSENT: Heidner, Smith, Morris

PRESENT:

Motion approved (4-0, 3 absent).

Director Jennings stated that the recommendation would go to the Board and he will most likely request a vote in the same meeting rather than starting with the Committee of the Whole. He stated that the meeting would be September 16<sup>th</sup> and would confirm the date with the petitioner. with that explanation.

**THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED AT 7:51 PM.**

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Chair Pro-tem Cotton called for the opening of the following public hearing:

2. **Public Hearing for Case #2025-12.** A petition filed by Focus Development Inc., on behalf of the property owners, requesting: (1) amendments to Ordinance 2013-014 (as amended) to revise the Hawthorn Mall PUD granting variations to the Zoning Code and Sign Code, and to allow for the subdivision of the property described below; and (2) amendments to Ordinance 2013-013 (as amended) to revise the site plan, landscape plan, and architectural plans associated with the Hawthorn Mall PUD to facilitate construction of a mixed-use building on the property described below, in accordance with Appendix C, Zoning, of the Village of Vernon Hills Code of Ordinances, Section 4.12, Section 13.3, Article 18, Section 21.5 and 21.6, and Chapter 19, Sign Code, Section 19.3.

**ALL PERSONS PROVIDING TESTIMONY WERE SWORN IN**

Scott Trafford (Affinius Capital), Nick Igel (Cooper Carry Architects), Tim Anderson (CEO, Focus), Courtney Brower (Vice President, Focus), Sam Whitebread (Centennial Real Estate), Andrew Czajkowski (SK+I Architects), Kayla O'Sullivan, (Kimley-Horn, civil engineers), and Lauren Robinson (Focus Development), and Bredan Cloney (Clark Condon Associates, landscape architect) were present on behalf of the petition and sworn in.

Mr. Trafford provided an introduction to the proposal and project team. He displayed images of the previous approval of the development along with the overview of the current proposal. The previous approval demolished a portion of the mall and shifted the mixed-use building to the west side. Reconsidering the design, they determined that it would be more efficient shifted east to open a better connection to Town Line Road. This preserves about 103,000 sq ft of retail.

Ms. Brower introduced the mixed-use element of the project. She displayed a slide comparing the basic data of the previous approval and current proposal. The current mixed-use building proposal has 288-290 dwelling units, 37,000 sq ft of retail, and a garage with 540 stalls serving both the retail and residential uses.

She displayed the site plan, noting the building would now be directly south of the existing Phase I building. She highlighted the following: (1) the paseo providing a pedestrian connection from

the main parking field to the retail street; (2) open view of retail street and plaza due to wide intersection at the south entry to the retail street; (3) wide sidewalks and café areas to encourage pedestrian activity; (4) less prominent garage entrances; (5) private amenity space for residents; and (6) public restrooms for the outdoor space and retail areas.

Ms. Brower displayed images comparing photos of existing conditions and the proposed renderings of the development. She emphasized features such as outdoor space, design detail on the buildings, and private patios for the residential units.

Mr. Czajkowski reviewed the proposed architectural character. He noted that the approved design had been received well, so the team intended to replicate the design in the reconfigured building. He explained how the materials shifted from the retail street to the residential side, with different materials to highlight the residential entrance along the retail street. He distributed material samples to the Commission and reviewed where each material would appear on the building. He explained that the architecture and materials change along Mall Drive where the building becomes fully residential. There are landscaped courtyards and pocket parks along the road.

Commission Fluno asked whether the Hardie panels would be the sizes as shown on the rendering. Mr. Czajkowski confirmed that the panels would vary in size as shown with a mix of large panels and lap siding. He noted that one of the garage entrances would be more convenient for residents because it would connect directly to the gate to the upper level. He added that the space between Phase I and Phase II would be a pleasant and active walkway primarily for the residents.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked whether both Phase I and Phase II would have balconies, and whether there are restrictions for storage on the balconies. Mr. Czajkowski confirmed both would have balconies. Mr. Trafford confirmed that the residential management restricts storage and displays like lights on the balconies.

Mr. Czajkowski reviewed additional open spaces, including the dog park on the east side of the building. He referred to rendering showing how different materials would be used to provide shadow and texture to the building.

Mr. Cloney reviewed the landscape plan for the project. The south entrance to Hawthorn Row would have large patio spaces for restaurants. The walkway and plaza surfaces would have a variety of materials to provide visual interest. He noted that the sidewalk would be split with about 8 ft against the side of the building. There would be flat areas against the building with steps to make up the grade change. By the street the sidewalk would be sloped.

Mr. Cloney explained that the streetscape would be softened with landscape beds. There would be a small 1,800 sq ft dog run along the mews area between the Phase I and Phase II buildings. The changes in surface treatment would continue around the building to highlight features like the residential building entrance and paseo entrance. The plant palette would include native plants and year-round interest.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked whether the sidewalk planters would have seasonal plantings. Mr. Cloney explained that some would have street trees, but all would have some type of ground cover.

Ms. Brower introduced the plan to include affordable housing units in the development. The units would be available to people earning 60% or less of the area median income. The income and rent limits would be defined by HUD annually. For 2025, a one-person household making \$50,400 could rent a studio apartment for \$1,185 a month, or 40% less than market rate. This could serve entry level teachers or retail workers, even making it possible for some people to live and work on the site.

Ms. Robinson reviewed the plans for the proposed improvements to the mall. She noted that the north end of the east plaza has not changed from the prior approval and is not included in the current proposal. She displayed a comparison between the 2022 approval and current plan, highlighting that the 130,000 sq ft demolition is no longer proposed. Only 5,600 sq ft of the mall, a protrusion on the south side, would be demolished. Nearly 160,000 sq ft of existing mall area would have outward facing frontage. By leaving more of the mall intact the plaza had to be reconfigured and reduced to roughly 2.25 acres.

Ms. Robinson described the most notable features of the mall improvements: (1) two story entrances on the south and east elevations; (2) outward facing retail on the south and east facades; (3) main plaza with outdoor seating and event space; (4) a landscaped pedestrian ribbon connecting the south and east entrances; and (5) reconfiguration of the south parking field. This is related to the Mall Drive shift and aligning the aisles to the new south entrance.

Mr. Igel presented the proposed architecture for the mall building. He displayed images of the existing mall building and renderings of the proposed improvements. He highlighted improvements to the east plaza and east entrance, the connecting from the existing Hawthorn Row area to the new entrance, and the updated south elevation with a new entrance and outward facing retail.

Director Jennings referred to the elevation view and the conditions of approval in the Staff report. He noted that the design guideline document was written for the new inline retail and not intended to apply to the mall. There is a suggested condition of approval allowing the landlord and Village Staff to review tenant storefront designs and approve them provided that they are compatible with the character and materials shown in the approved plans.

Commissioner Fluno requested clarification. He asked whether this would allow a tenant to display their color scheme and typical branding. Director Jennings confirmed that it would have a similar impact to the design guidelines for the inline retail.

Mr. Cloney described the design intentions for the east plaza. The design is less cluttered than the previous plan; the area is smaller and they wanted to ensure there as much open and flexible use space as possible. There is a path through the plaza that would align with the existing east

segment of Hawthorn Row. At the base of the upper plaza retaining wall they have an open area they refer to as the retail landing. The lawn would be available for seasonal programming, such as in ice rink in the winter. The outward facing retail units would have individual zones separate from the plaza.

Mr. Trafford concluded the team's presentation with a focus on the community benefit of the open space in the plaza. He stated that the group is excited to get started on the Phase II project.

Commissioner Fluno referred to the wall by the retail landing. He asked why the concept was for faux plant material, and Mr. Traffman indicated it was a placeholder in the renderings. Commissioner Fluno suggested live plants as faux plants get discolored over time.

Commissioner Fluno noted that as more people reside at the property, the need for pedestrian facilities on the site and connecting the rest of the Village is becoming more apparent. He asked what the group planned for improved connectivity.

Ms. O'Sullivan referred to a more detailed pedestrian plan in a separate presentation. She noted the sidewalks being constructed as each element of the redevelopment plan is completed. Commissioner Fluno reiterated that his concern is with connections off of the mall campus.

Ms. Robinson noted that the primary mall owner does not own the parcel west of Phase II. They are in regular dialog with the other owners and can continue to work on this issue. Ms. O'Sullivan added that there will be walkways constructed with Phase II that would provide access to Townline. As the redevelopment continues along Townline sidewalk would be added.

Commission Lis asked whether there is a crosswalk on Townline by Sleep Number. Ms. O'Sullivan explained that the project doesn't include improvements on Townline. Director Jennings noted the intersection connects to a shopping center on the south side of Townline that has its own circulation and congestion issues. The crosswalk would likely be a Village project. The Village wants to ensure that the residents can access the parks, Des Plaines River Trail, and other locations in the community. They are not sure yet how the connections to the west would look.

Commissioner Fluno asked if there would be bike racks, and Ms. Robinson confirmed racks were planned for the plaza. Ms. O'Sullivan added that there are racks at the existing mall entrances.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether the sidewalk plant containers would have seasonal plantings. Ms. Robinson referred to the landscape architect's presentation, and confirmed the plantings would be rotated.

Commissioner Lis asked whether the plans reflected changes made during Technical Review. Director Jennings explained that a lot of the civil drawings were only provided digitally. The site plan shows changes that were made such as removing some of the diagonal parking or

increasing the drive aisle width where diagonal parking remains. The drive aisles in the main south lot are also perpendicular to the entrance.

Commissioner Lis asked whether the south lot would serve the new retail in the mixed-use building. Ms. O'Sullivan explained that there is some street parking, but the street would also be accessible to the south lot through the paseo connection. Signage would direct people to the garage.

Commissioner Lis asked which stalls needed the variation for total length. Ms. O'Sullivan stated that the existing stalls to remain are shorter than required. Ms. Brower added that the stalls in the garage are also 9 ft x 18 ft.

Commissioner Lis asked whether the street area landscaping would be hit by car doors. Ms. Brower stated that the beds are 18 inches from the curb, and Mr. Cloney added that it would be from the back of the street curb.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked where employees would park, given that retail parking is limited. Ms. Brower said that employees could park in the garage or that Centennial could define employee parking areas on the campus.

Commissioner Nabat asked how many levels were in the garage and how many stalls were allocated for residential and retail. Ms. Brower stated the garage would be 4 levels, with 130 retail stalls and 430 residential stalls.

Commissioner Nabat asked whether ownership would require employees to park in a specific location, and Ms. Brower agreed that could be done.

Commissioner Fluno asked about parking for guests of apartment residents. Ms. Brower noted that was an issue in the Domaine building and they are looking into solutions like a keypad with a code. Similar to the Domaine the residential stalls would be in the upper levels past the gate.

Commissioner Fluno referred to the parking table, noting that it appeared the total number of stalls decreased when the unit count increased. Ms. Brower explained that the Domaine demand is 1.09 per unit, which would be 1.17 at full occupancy. They are requesting a reduction from the prior approval, 1.5/unit, to 1.4/unit. She added that the retail parking is separate from that quantity.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether the quantity and ratio of retail parking changed. Ms. Brower said that the approved ratio is 4.16 stalls per 1000 sq ft, and that hasn't changed.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether there would be electric vehicle charging stations in the new building, similar to the first one. Ms. Brower said there would be a lot more EV charging stations, as state law requires 0.5 stalls per unit to be EV ready, with adequate electrical capacity and conduit in place.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether the retail area would have EV chargers and Ms. Brower said there would be about 10.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked whether restaurants count as retail for the parking requirement. Ms. Brower said that demand fluctuates throughout the day and there are some times where the restaurants are busier. Overall the campus can absorb the increase but the walk may be farther at times.

Director Jennings referred to a condition of approval in the staff report for wayfinding signage. He explained the staff concern is with the distribution of parking and not the total count. A lot of high-demand uses are near the south lot. Signs directing customers to other parking areas need to be placed at critical decision points on the campus. This would address the hot spots and peak demand on weekends. Ms. Brower agreed, and noted that the team has been working a plan.

Mr. Traffman added that lease restrictions can be used to determine and enforce employee parking locations. He added that they have removed roughly 200,000 sq ft of retail and some parking has been added.

Commissioner Nabat noted that parking demand remained high even when stores started closing. She referred to Melody Farm, which she noted is packed. She suggested designating employee parking and considering time limits in the garage. Mr. Traffman agreed that the ownership is in favor of making the stalls available for customers.

Director Jennings referred to a building code issue relating to EV chargers. He noted that there is a possibility the State will reduce the EV charger requirement and that Staff has a safety concern with chargers in the upper levels of parking structures. EV fires are difficult to extinguish, so a common tactic is to drag the vehicle out to a surface lot to avoid additional damage. There is a suggested condition of approval to allow flexibility in setting the final EV ready quantity and location.

Commissioner Nabat asked how the driving access would work from Townline. Ms. O'Sullivan said that the team refers to that entrance as Gate 5. The intersection of Mall Drive from Gate 5 is a 3 way stop so that incoming traffic doesn't back up to Townline. The additional segment of Hawthorn Row would be right-out only onto westbound Mall Drive. There is a raised pork chop to enforce the flow of traffic. Gate 5 is already strained so the plan is to divert cars to Gate 4 to the west.

Commissioner Lis asked if left turns from eastbound Mall Drive would be allowed, and Ms. O'Sullivan said that they would.

Commissioner Fluno asked if there was a concern that the northbound vehicles, which don't have to stop, would enter Hawthorn Row too fast. Ms. O'Sullivan said that the Gate 6 condition entering the east-west segment of Hawthorn Row is similar. They haven't seen an issue at that intersection.

Commissioner Fluno referred to the chain link fence on the top of the first building. Director Jennings said that the issue came up during Technical Review. The fence is required for fall protection due to the ease of access from the garage to the roof. Staff asked for the next building to restrict access to avoid permanent fall protection. The rooftop units are expected to be far enough back that screening won't be needed, but the recommendation is that screens be designed up front if it turns out they are needed.

Commissioner Fluno asked if they would be screened from the AMC area. Director Jennings said the standard is eye level from about 200 ft away. In the event that the units need to shift to a more visible location, the roof design should address that up front because it is difficult to retrofit.

Commissioner Fluno asked about the staff comment regarding the view from the south parking lot. Director Jennings referred to the west elevation of the smaller mixed use building. He said that the Staff suggestion was to improve the area because it is so visible. Commissioner Fluno questioned whether a mural could be added.

Ms. Brower said that there are some murals proposed, but the area is recessed and screened by a generous landscape area. Mr. Cloney explained that the area is a service corridor for the retail units that face east. The plan is to mound the area up and step up from ground cover to shrubs with maples behind.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether a more continuous screen was possible. Mr. Cloney said that they can look at options but want to avoid a monocrop since a disease could impact all of the plantings.

Director Jennings asked for clarification. He noted the plans did not reflect the description provided. Mr. Cloney clarified that he was speaking about options to address the staff comment. Director Jennings suggested an open-ended condition allowing the team to look at alternative arrangements for the area facing the parking field.

Commissioner Lis asked about the staff suggestion to have a shared center turn lane near Sleep Number. Director Jennings explained it was missed on Technical Review. Staff is suggesting a shared turn lane. Both left turns are possible, but one is striped as a dedicated lane and creates confusion since the opposite direction would need to cross into the queue to turn.

Commissioner Lis requested clarification on the use of the lane. Ms. O'Sullivan referred to the plan and agreed that the dedicated left into Sleep Number would become a shared center left turn lane. People would understand that vehicles could come from either direction.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked if there were any additional Staff comments. Director Jennings explained that the petition would have the effect of amending the previously approved Phase II development. The intention is to replace the 2022 ordinance.

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton noted that the responses to the Standards for a Special Use in Section 18.3 and the Standards for a Variance in 21.5 had been provided in the staff report and were part of the record. She stated that notice had been provided as described in the Staff report. Director Jennings confirmed that no comments had been received.

## **THE HEARING WAS OPENED FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton opened the hearing to public comment.

Mr. Paul Bruno, resident of the Domaine apartments, was present and sworn in. He stated that the Domaine is great, and referred to Commissioner Fluno's comments on walkability. He believes some of the concerns will be addressed during the construction. Aligning the new Hawthorn Row segment to Gate 5 will increase demand for pedestrian facilities. There also is no crosswalk at Gate 4. He referred to the comparison with Gate 6 into the existing Hawthorn Row segment, and disagreed with the statement that it is not a problem. He said the intersection is not perfectly aligned so people are confused about where to go. He hasn't seen an accident but he has seen close calls.

Director Jennings stated that he had received written public comment and the policy is to read it into the record. He read the following from Heather Sherwin, 323 Marseille:

*I am unable to attend tonight's public hearing on the changes to the Hawthorn Mall project, but I am concerned by the increase in residential density. As Vernon Hills has added more single- and multi-family units, traffic has increased and resources have become strained. I worry that adding even more units to an already crowded area will impact quality of life for everyone. What type of traffic studies and other impact research has been conducted by Vernon Hills and/or the developer?*

*I also worry that the plan is changing midstream (not tearing down as much of the mall, adding in new pieces). This project could end up a wonderful asset to the community, but what I'm seeing so far is disconcerting. Thank you for taking the time to read my concerns; I'd appreciate you passing them on to the committee and giving real weight to just how much density our town can handle.*

No one else from the public was present to speak. and public comment was closed.

## **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. O'Sullivan responded to the public comment. She explained that the traffic study was completed after the Domaine and Perry's were open. IDOT and the Village concurred with the findings of the study. Gate 6 is just outside of the scope, but Gate 5 is designed with a pedestrian crosswalk through the landscape median in the Hawthorn Row intersection. The pork shop closes off the intersection to naturally slow cars down.

Director Jennings added that while the Gate 6 / Hawthorn Row intersection may be outside of the scope, the Village has a cooperative relationship with the mall team and will continue to work on the issue.

Commissioner Fluno asked whether someone would address the written comment on density. Director Jennings said that the difference with the 2022 approval is negligible. This is a very busy intersection and the 300 residential units won't have much impact on traffic.

Ms. O'Sullivan added that the mall has a lot of internal roads. Queueing internally doesn't impact the IDOT roads. Ms. Brower added that the traffic study also used a higher number of vehicles per unit.

## **DISCUSSION OF RECOMMENDATION**

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated that there is a standing motion to approve and referred to the draft motion from the staff report relating to the amendment of Ordinance 2013-13 (plans associated with Hawthorn Mall PUD).

Director Jennings read the conditions of approval including the staff report and additional conditions discussed during the hearing.

Commissioner Nabat requested discussion on the dedication of employee parking. Director Jennings it could be phrased per the consensus of the Commission.

Commissioner Fluno added that it would be within an area that the primary mall owner controls. Director Jennings asked whether the Commission would want the 7<sup>th</sup> condition, employee parking plan, to be mandatory or enforced if needed.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton preferred "as-needed" because it might not be necessary. Commissioner Lis agreed that they would do it since it is in their best interest.

Commissioner Fluno seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, the Commission voted on the motion as follows:

**Make Findings of Fact and Recommend Approval to Amend Ordinance No. 2013-13, as amended,** to revise the site plan, landscape plan, and architectural plans associated with the Hawthorn Mall PUD to facilitate the construction of a two-building mixed-use development, with a total of up to 290 residential units and 37,290 sq ft of retail for the property located at 800-845 Hawthorn Row (to be assigned), Vernon Hills, Illinois, as well as modifications to the existing mall building at 122 Hawthorn Center, as required by Section 13.3 (Special Uses in the B-1 District), and Section 4.12 (Site Plan Review), as described in the application by Focus Development, dated August 8, 2025, as illustrated on the following exhibits:

- Project Introduction Letter, Focus Development, dated August 21, 2025
- Overall Site Plan exhibits, Kimley-Horn Associates, last revised August 5, 2025
- Landscape Plan Package

- Plant Palette, Clark Condon, dated May 22, 2025
- Phase II plans, Clark Condon, last revised August 5, 2025
- Hawthorn Mall Plans, Clark Condon, dated May 22, 2025
- Architectural Plan Package
  - Phase II plans, SK+I Architecture, dated August 5, 2025
  - Hawthorn Mall II Elevations, Canon, dated May 22, 2025
  - Hawthorn Mall Plaza Landscape, Clark Condon, dated April 17, 2025
- Photometric Plan exhibits, Kimley-Horn Associates, last revised July 14, 2025
- Sign Package
  - Phase II Sign Plans, SK+I Architecture, March 4, 2025
  - Hawthorn Mall II Sign Plans, Canon, dated May 22, 2025

And with the Following Conditions of Approval:

1. The petitioner shall work with Staff to address light levels at the Hawthorn Row / Mall Drive intersection, and adjust the curb radius at Ring Road / Mall Drive intersection. These improvements shall be completed prior to the residential occupancy of the Phase II building.
2. The Director of Community Development shall have the authority to approve revisions and modifications to the approved Phase II Mall Elevations (including revisions and modifications to the materials, color palettes, signage and canopies) provided he reasonably determines that the revised or modified elevations substantially conform, in character, quality and architectural expression, to the approved Mall Elevations and complement the overall design of the Redevelopment Project.
3. The center lane on Mall Drive shall be striped as shared left for both directions of traffic rather than an offset dedicated left for one direction.
4. The petitioner shall consider alternative landscaping for the area west of west building.
5. In the event that rooftop mechanical units will be closer than 12 ft to the exterior wall, the construction drawings with the initial permit application shall include screen details.
6. The site wayfinding signage plan shall be provided with the site development permit application.
7. The petitioner shall provide a plan designating employee parking area(s), to be enforced in that event that employee parking is observed to limit customer access.
8. The petitioner shall continue to work with the Village to provide connections to the adjacent Village sidewalk and path network.
9. The petitioner is encouraged to revised the landscape plan to provide live plantings on the feature wall adjacent to the retail landing (retaining wall for upper level beer garden near lower lever east entrance).
10. The petitioner shall ensure that railings selected for the upper level beer garden are designed for the purpose of fall protection.

AYES: Cotton, Fluno, Lis, Nabat

NAYS:

ABSENT: Heidner, Morris, Smith

PRESENT:

Motion approved (4-0, 3 absent).

*Note regarding Building Code Relief (Board Review referenced during hearing): Requirement for Electric Vehicle charging may be referenced to provide flexibility pending fire district review and possible changes to State requirements.*

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated that there is a standing motion to approve and referred to the draft motion from the staff report relating to the amendment of Ordinance 2013-14 (special use permit for the Mall PUD). Director Jennings explained that the plans were included in the previous motion and the current motion includes the code relief. He read the variations referenced in the draft motion, noting the variations that would be different from the prior approval.

Commissioner Nabat seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, the Commission voted on the motion as follows:

**Make Findings of Fact and Recommend Approval to Amend Ordinance No. 2013-014, as amended,** to revise the Special Use Permit for the Hawthorn Mall Planned Unit Development, for the located at 800-845 Hawthorn Row (to be assigned), Vernon Hills, Illinois, as well as modifications to the existing mall building at 122 Hawthorn Center, as required by Section 13.3 (Special Uses in the B-1 District), as described in the application by Focus Development, dated August 8, 2025, to reaffirm approval of prior variations and modify the list of variations as follows:

#### Zoning Code Variations

1. Section 13.6.1, reduce required front setback from 60.0 ft to 16.0 ft (23.9 ft previously approved)
2. Section 13.6.2, reduce required side setback from 35.0 ft to 7.0 ft (20.0 ft previously approved)
3. Section 13.5.1, permit a building height of 4 stories (54 ft) at architectural towers (not specified in previous approval)
4. Section 13.5.1, to permit a building height of 5 stories (63 ft) at elevator towers (60 ft previously approved)
5. Section 19.7, reducing the parking ratio from 2.3 stalls/unit to 1.4 stalls per unit (1.5 previously approved)
6. Section 4.10.1: reducing the minimum size of a 1-bedroom unit from 1,200 sq ft to 650 sq ft; reducing the minimum size of a 2-bedroom unit from 1,400 sq ft to 1,000 sq ft; and reducing the minimum size of a 3-bedroom unit from 1,600 sq ft to 1,250 sq ft (1,300 sq ft previously approved).

#### Sign Code Variations

1. Section 19-3(c)6a:
  - a. Allowing the wall sign for Dave & Busters on the east elevation to be 339 square feet rather than the maximum permitted size of 150 square feet;
  - b. Allowing the iconic place making sign reading "Hawthorn" located on the east elevation to be ~~496~~ **515** square feet rather than the maximum permitted size of 150 square feet;
  - c. Allowing the east elevation "Hawthorn" sign to be mounted above the roofline;
  - d. Allowing the mall identification sign above the new south **and east** entrances to be 77 square feet rather than the maximum permitted size of 44 square feet.
  - e. Allow blade signs up to 5 sq ft that would not be included in maximum wall sign area.

AYES: Cotton, Fluno, Lis, Nabat  
NAYS:  
ABSENT: Heidner, Morris, Smith  
PRESENT:

Motion approved (4-0, 3 absent).

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated that there is a standing motion to approve and referred to the draft motion from the staff report relating to the plat of subdivision. Director Jennings stated that staff is recommending a standard condition of approval that the plat is subject to the review of the Village Engineer, Attorney, and Lake County Public Works.

Commissioner Lis seconded the motion.

There being no further discussion, the Commission voted on the motion as follows:

**Recommend approval of the waiver of preliminary plat requirements and final plat approval**, for the six lot subdivision entitled Hawthorn Center Resubdivision No. 6, by Compass Surveying (Scot Krebs, license no. 3509), in a form substantially similar to the draft plat last revised May 13, 2025, in accordance with Appendix B, Development regulations, of the Village Code, Appendix I, Project Documents, Section D, Final Planning Stage Documentation, subject to the following condition:

1. Plat approval is subject to the final review and approval of the Village Engineer, Village Attorney, and Lake County Public Works.

AYES: Cotton, Fluno, Lis, Nabat  
NAYS:  
ABSENT: Heidner, Morris, Smith  
PRESENT:

Motion approved (4-0, 3 absent).

Director Jennings stated that he anticipates that the Board review would be scheduled for September 16<sup>th</sup>. He plans to request a vote that night because there is only one meeting in September and the concept hasn't changed since the last Board review.

**THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED AT 9:50 PM.**

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#### IV. Approval of Minutes

- a. Planning & Zoning Commission minutes July 23, 2025

Chair Pro-tem Cotton stated there is a standing motion to approve. Commissioner Nabat seconded the motion. The motion was approved by voice vote.

## **V. Development Review**

Director Jennings provided updates on the following items:

Recent openings:

- Kyuramen
- Aged in Oak
- Stan's Donuts (within Mariano's)
- BHOP

Construction Updates:

- Farmer's Best
- Mendocino Farms
- Wells Fargo
- Kiddie Academy
- Ionna EV chargers (Casey's)
- Qdoba
- Countryside FPD
- Raising Cane's
- Nest (review)
- Mall Drive shift
- Guzman y Gomez (review)

Commissioner Fluno asked for the status of Raising Cane's. Director Jennings said that they may start this fall as opposed to early 2026.

Chair Pro-tem Cotton asked if DSW was closing. Director Jennings explained that the unit was decreasing in size, with some of the area to become part of the Farmer's Best store.

Commissioner Nabat asked what Mendocino Farms is. Director Jennings said it looks like a sandwich shop and he doesn't know of one nearby. He noted that the Melody Farm PUD allows for new tenants to modify the storefronts provided that the character is determined by Staff to be consistent with the PUD.

## **VI. Adjournment**

With no further items on the agenda, Chair Pro-tem Cotton moved to adjourn. Commissioner Fluno seconded. The motion was approved by a voice vote.

The meeting adjourned at 9:53 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Jennings  
Director of Community Development

Distribution:  
President and Board of Trustees  
Village Manager/Village Clerk  
Commission Members

\_\_\_\_\_  
Approval Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair Pro-tem Cotton

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary Pro-tem Fluno

DRAFT

**EXHIBIT C**

**Plans and Exhibits**

Case 2025-11: Sign Variation

Baxter Credit Union (BCU)  
300-340 N. Milwaukee Avenue

**Job Narrative**  
**Baxter Credit Union**  
**340 N Milwaukee Ave**  
**Vernon Hills, IL 60061**

North Shore Sign will be working with Baxter Credit Union on updating their sign. We plan to demo the 13-year-old existing sign and build a similar replacement sign. The reason for this is because BCU would like to move their sign closer to the intersection to gain more visibility from potential customers. We will be building a new sign that includes a new Watchfire unit, a new ID portion, and a GenStone faux stone base. Power will be brought from the old sign to the new sign location. The design and color scheme will be tied into the BCU brand.

The digital sign we are proposing has a photocell attached to it that will dim the sign at night making it less bright and distracting. The digital sign will be a Watchfire brand which is the same brand digital sign that the Vernon Hills Village Hall, Police Station, and Public Works currently use. Watchfire signs come with software that is completely customizable allowing the business to post static messages with seamless transitions. The message length can be customized so that there are not multiple messages in a short period of time. Most villages require a minimum time of 10 to 30 seconds which this software can comply with. If there are any limitations or restrictions, BCU can work with the village to make sure their sign complies.

1. Explain how the property in question cannot yield a reasonable return if permitted to be used only under the conditions allowed by the regulations in that zone.

The customer would like to move their sign closer to the intersection so that it gains more visibility. The current sign is hard to read due to all of the trees and high elevation. This corner is more ground level which will make the messages easier to read.

2. White unique circumstances apply to the property that are not generally applicable to other properties?

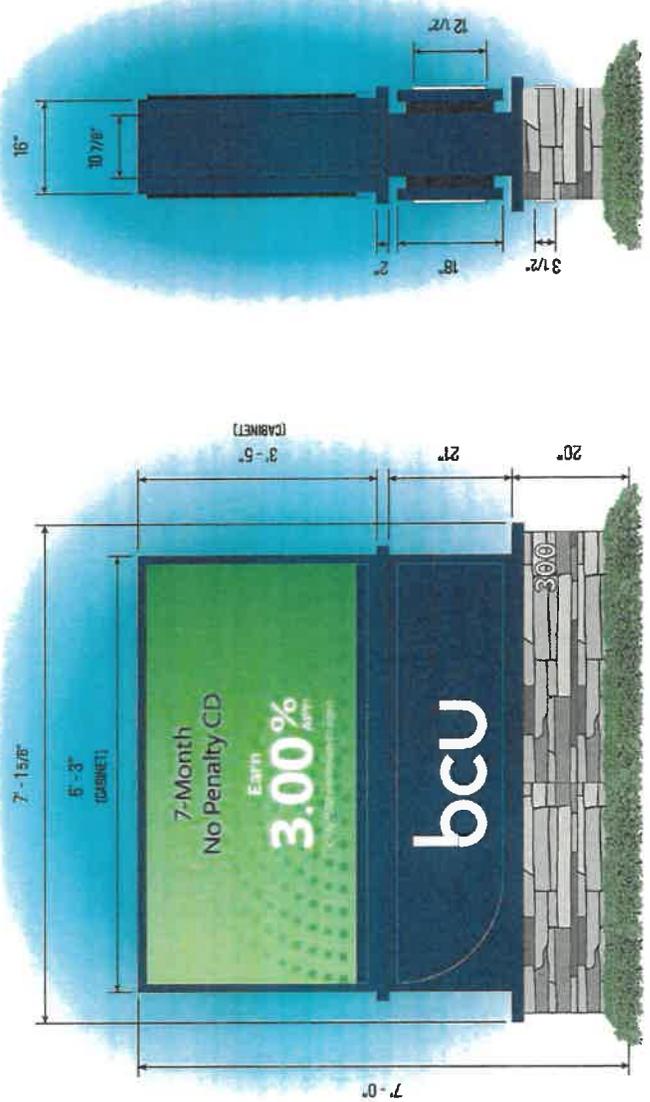
This property has an ideal intersection for a sign with an open grass area that is ground level. This location would make it easy for people passing by to read the sign and help gain visibility of the sign. Their current location is up on a hill with trees around it making it difficult to read the sign.

3. Explain how the variation, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality.

The proposed new location for the sign would be going into an open grass area with new landscaping around it. Customer will be removing three trees from Milwaukee Avenue, but these removals have been approved by the associations property manager.



**FRONT & SIDE VIEWS**



**JOB SPECS**

**DESCRIPTION**

- FURNISH & INSTALL (1) NEW D/F MONUMENT SIGN W/ (2) NEW LED WATCHFIRE EMC UNITS
- INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED
- SINGLE, CENTER POLE MOUNT (IN-GROUND BURY)

**MATERIALS**

- FABRICATED ALUMINUM SIGN CABINET, REVERSE CHANNEL BACKER & REVEALS
- 3/4" WHITE PUSH-THRU PLEX - **BCU LOGO**
- 3/4" WHITE DIMENSIONAL ACRYLIC - **ADDRESS**
- SAMSUNG WHITE LED ILLUMINATION W/ 60 W POWER SUPPLY(S)
- (2) LED WATCHFIRE EMC UNITS:
  - DIMENSIONS: 6" x 3" x 5" (CABINET), 6" x 3" x 0" (VIEWING AREA)
  - RESOLUTION: 8 mm
  - MATRIX: 108 x 216
- FABRICATED ALU-PANEL (ALUMINUM COMPOSITE) & ALUMINUM ANGLE SIGN BASE W/ GENSTONE FAUX STONE WRAPPING

**COLORS/GRAPHICS/FONTS**

- PAINT: (SATIN POLYURETHANE) BCU BLUE (PMS 281 C)
- GENSTONE FAUX STONE WRAPPING: NORTHERN SLATE

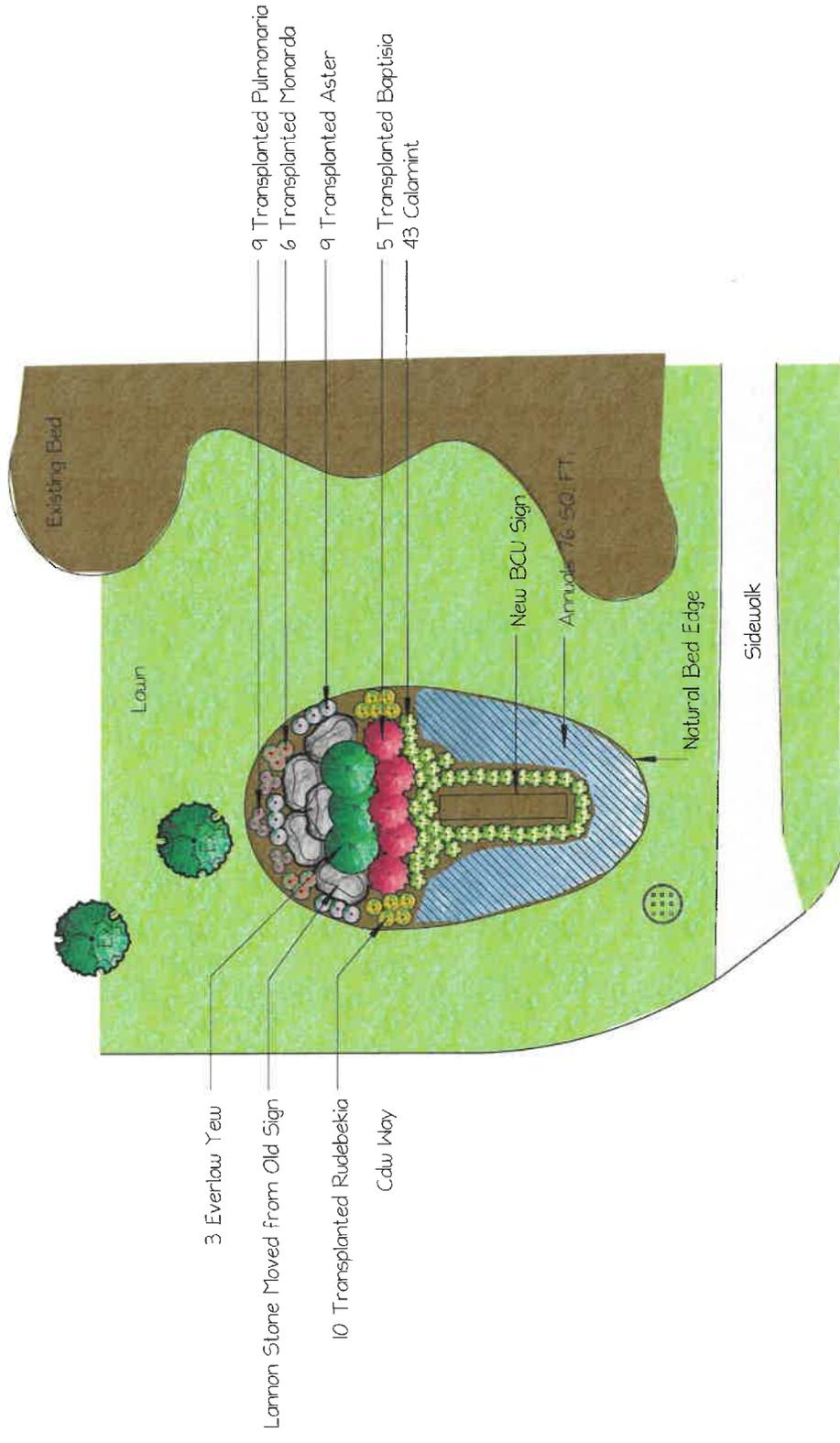
Colors depicted on this drawing are printed simulations to assist in visualizing the design. They do not accurately reflect the actual colors specified. This design is the exclusive property of North Shore Sign Company Inc, and is the result of the original and creative work of its employees. This drawing is submitted to the respective customer for the sole purpose of consideration of whether or not to purchase this design, or a sign manufactured to this design from North Shore Sign Co. Distribution, use of, or exhibition of this drawing to anyone outside customers organization, in order to secure quotation, design work, or purchase of a sign either to this design or similar to this design, is expressly prohibited. In the event that such distribution, use or exhibition occurs, North Shore Sign is to be compensated \$1500.00 for time, effort and creative service required in creating these drawings as any and all legal fees and expenses to enforce its rights. Copyright 2020 North Shore Sign Company Inc.



QUALITY SINCE 1930  
**NORTH SHORE SIGN**  
 1828 INDUSTRIAL DRIVE - URBESTVILLE, IL 60089 • 847-416-7090

<b>BCU (VERNON HILLS)</b>		300 N. MILWAUKEE AVE. VERNON HILLS, IL 60061	
SCALE: 1/2" = 1'	DATE: 5-9-25	PROJECT: B301V-2025-002	REVISION: B
FILE: SALES	DATE: 5-9-25	REVISED WATCHFIRE SPECS	
		7-30-25	BY: MTL
			CHK: MTL

# BCU 300



- 3 Everlaw Yew
- Lannon Stone Moved from Old Sign
- 10 Transplanted Rudebekia
- Cdu Way
- 9 Transplanted Pulmonaria
- 6 Transplanted Monarda
- 9 Transplanted Aster
- 5 Transplanted Baptisia
- 43 Catarrant

client:	BCU 300	address:	300 N Milwaukee Ave
scale:	1" = 6'	date:	7/30/25
drawn by:	Con. Jim Ruckell	checked by:	
		revision:	9/5/25
		drawn by:	

N Milwaukee Ave

VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-105

AN ORDINANCE APPROVING VARIATIONS FROM CHAPTER 19, SIGNS, OF THE  
VERNON HILLS VILLAGE CODE, FOR BAXTER CREDIT UNION  
300-340 N. MILWAUKEE AVENUE

THE 16<sup>th</sup> AY OF SEPTEMBER 2025

Published in pamphlet form by the Authority of the  
President and Board of Trustees of the Village of  
Vernon Hills, Lake County, Illinois, this  
16<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2025



AFFIDAVIT OF SERVICE

STATE OF ILLINOIS        )  
  )  
COUNTY OF LAKE         )

I, KEVIN TIMONY, BEING FIRST DULY APPOINTED, DEPOSES AND SAYS ON OATH THAT AS VILLAGE CLERK OF THE VILLAGE OF VERNON HILLS, HE DID CAUSE THE FOREGOING CERTIFICATE FOR ORDINANCE NO. 2025-105 AN ORDINANCE APPROVING VARIATIONS FROM CHAPTER 19, SIGNS, OF THE VERNON HILLS VILLAGE CODE, FOR BAXTER CREDIT UNION 300-340 N. MILWAUKEE AVENUE TO BE POSTED IN THE VILLAGE HALL AS REQUIRED BY LAW FROM SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2025.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kevin Timony, Village Clerk

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME  
THIS 16<sup>th</sup> DAY OF SEPTEMBER, 2025

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public

