FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION OFFICE OF PLANNING AND ZONING ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

APPLICANT: Longhorn Steakhouse (Tenant)

ASSESSMENT DISTRICT: 3

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 2

CASE NUMBER: 2024-0054-V

HEARING DATE: June 13, 2024

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Lechner Planner

REQUEST

The applicant is requesting a variance to allow identification signs for the name of a tenant in a business complex on more facades than allowed on property located at 7941 Ritchie Highway in Glen Burnie.

LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The subject property consists of approximately 41.8 acres of land and is located with approximately 765 feet of frontage along the east side of Ritchie Highway, 1,960 feet of frontage along the north side of Mountain Road, and 840 feet of frontage along the west side of Maryland Route 10 (MD 10). It is identified as Parcel 28 in Grid 8 on Tax Map 16 in the Glen Burnie subdivision.

The property is zoned C3 – General Commercial District, as adopted by the comprehensive zoning for Council District 2, effective January 29, 2012. The subject site is a future tenant building for "Longhorn Steakhouse" within the Southdale Center shopping center.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to install signage on all four facades of the tenant's building.

REQUESTED VARIANCES

§ 18-3-308(b)(2) of the Anne Arundel County Zoning Ordinance provides that a business complex may have identification signs for the name of a tenant on not more than two facades in a one or two story structure, so long as the area of the signs does not exceed, for each tenant facade, the lesser of 10% of the area of the facade or 200 square feet. Per the submitted sign renderings, the applicant is proposing identification signs on all four tenant facades, necessitating a variance for signage on the third and fourth facades.

FINDINGS

A review of the County aerial photography shows a business complex (shopping center) with inline and standalone tenant buildings consisting of a variety of mercantile and office uses. A tenant building for the subject signage does not currently exist.

The County photography also shows signage for the existing freestanding tenant buildings in the shopping center.

- Starbucks (#7933) has signs on three facades: facing north towards the entrance from Americana Drive (granted by variance 2017-0331-V), facing west to Ritchie Hwy and south to the parking lot.
- CapitalOne Bank (#7937) has signs on two facades: facing west to Ritchie Highway and facing south into the parking lot.
- Glory Days (#7939) has signs on three facades: facing northwest to Ritchie Hwy, facing southwest to the onramp from Mountain Rd to Ritchie Hwy and southeast into the parking lot. A variance was not found granting signage on the third facade.
- Burger King (#14) has signage on two facades: facing west towards the shopping center entrance off Mountain Rd and facing north into the parking lot.
- Bank of America (#80) has signage on one facade: facing south to Mountain Rd.

Grading permit G02019990, for the construction of a non-residential building, was submitted on January 23, 2024 and remains pending. Building permit B02425633, for the construction of a new restaurant building, was submitted on April 16, 2024 and remains pending.

The applicant's letter explains that the branding package is designed to fit the building's architecture, and to allow for a smooth transfer of information to motorists as they are traveling the heavily signed commercial corridor and because they are unable to have a freestanding sign.

Agency Comments

The Health Department and Fire Marshal offered no objection to the request.

Variance Criteria

For the granting of a zoning variance, a determination must be made as to whether, because of certain unique physical conditions peculiar to or inherent in the particular lot or because of exceptional circumstances other than financial considerations, strict implementation of the Code would result in practical difficulties or an unnecessary hardship.

In this particular case, the new tenant space will be located within the parking lot of the shopping center, generally in line with the other freestanding tenant buildings and next to the freestanding business complex sign. Although it appears that the Code did not anticipate freestanding tenants in business complexes, which are typically multi-tenanted strip centers, these freestanding

tenants appear to enjoy relatively easy visibility along Ritchie Highway and Mountain Road, as compared to the inline tenants within the strip buildings.

While additional facade signage may be warranted for the freestanding tenant buildings compared to the multi-tenanted buildings, signage on four facades seems excessive. None of the other freestanding tenant buildings in this complex have signage on four facades. In addition, the Code allows for directional signage within a business complex as needed¹ which could lead motorists to the general area of the restaurant and its parking areas. Identification signage on all four facades would alter the essential character of the neighborhood, impair the appropriate use or development of adjacent properties, and be detrimental to the public welfare.

As such, the requested variance is not considered the minimum necessary to afford relief and this Office cannot support the variance for the additional signage, as proposed.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the standards set forth in § 18-16-305 of the Code under which a variance may be granted, as proposed, this Office recommends <u>denial</u> of a zoning variance to § 18-3-308(b)(2) to allow tenant identification signs on four facades in a business complex.

DISCLAIMER: This recommendation does not constitute a building permit. In order for the applicant to construct the structure(s) as proposed, the applicant shall apply for and obtain the necessary building permits, and obtain any other approvals required to perform the work described herein. This includes but is not limited to verifying the legal status of the lot, resolving adequacy of public facilities, and demonstrating compliance with environmental site design criteria.

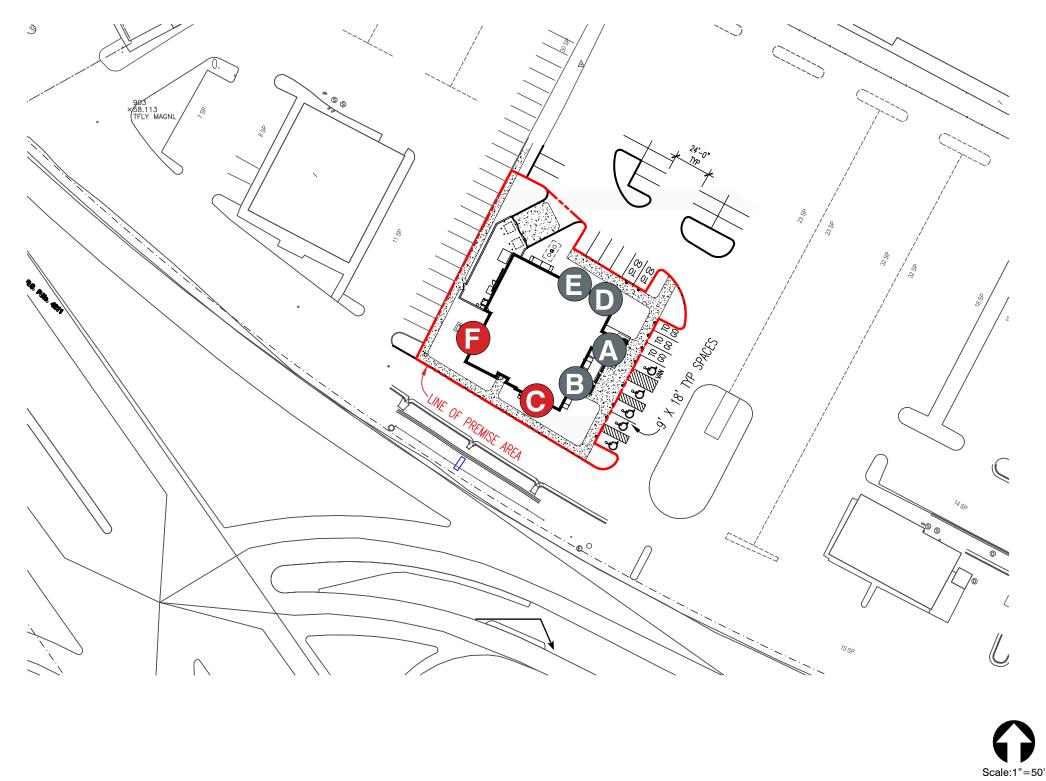
¹ § 18-3-308. Signs for business complexes. (c) Directional signs. A business complex may have directional signs as necessary. Each sign may not exceed six square feet in area or a height of five feet.

SITE PLAN

- A 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF
- B Steer Logo: 19.7 SF
- 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF
- D 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF
- E Steer Logo: 19.7 SF

E

36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF



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Letter of Explanation

- Article 18-3-308(b)(2)

- Variance required for signage placed on (4) elevations that is in excess of (3) allowed elevations for signage.
 - Allowed by Code: (2) elevations for signage.
 - Variance Requested: To place signage on (4) elevations.

(a) **Requirements for zoning variances.** The Administrative Hearing Officer may vary or modify the provisions of this article when it is alleged that practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships prevent conformance with the strict letter of this article, provided the spirit of law is observed, public safety secured, and substantial justice done. A variance may be granted only if the Administrative Hearing Officer makes the following affirmative findings:

(1) Because of certain unique physical conditions, such as irregularity, narrowness or shallowness of lot size and shape or exceptional topographical conditions peculiar to and inherent in the particular lot, there is no reasonable possibility of developing the lot in strict conformance with this article; or

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse is respectfully requesting branding/architectural elements on all four elevations due to the fact that this building has been designed to house architectural embellishments in order to break up the monotony of the empty walls. The lot Longhorn Steakhouse is located on is exceptionally small and located in a parking lot of Southdale Center where there are numerous businesses. With no freestanding sign, this property requires branding on all four elevations with the amount of approaches the parking areas allow for.

While the branding package we are respectfully requesting is designed to fit the building's architecture, it is also designed to allow for a smooth transfer of information to motorists as they are travelling the heavily signed commercial corridor. There is a freestanding sign that abuts the property to the Southeast that has eight businesses on it, none of which will be Longhorn Steakhouse. In order to clearly show where Longhorn Steakhouse is located, we are respectfully requesting branding/architectural elements on all four elevations while proposing 315ft², which is 75ft² less than the code allowed 400ft² or 10% per façade per site.

Here is a further breakdown of the percentage of each elevation dedicated to signage:

Front: 4.8% Left: 3.6% Right: 4.6%

Rear: 3.7%



(2) Because of exceptional circumstances other than financial considerations, the grant of a variance is necessary to avoid practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship and to enable the applicant to develop the lot.

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse is located on an outparcel lot within Southdale Center and this limits the amount of property Longhorn Steakhouse must separate itself from the surrounding businesses. In order to be clearly identified and allow motorists to safely maneuver to the property, Longhorn Steakhouse has chosen to remain well under the 10% allowed per façade.

For more detail regarding the proposed package, there are four sets of channel letters that read "Longhorn Steakhouse" and two steer head logos. The steer head logos are much like what you would see at Glory Days Grill and the stars located around the top of each facade. They are designed to break up the architectural features such as bump outs and chimneys that you can find on the elevations of the Longhorn Steakhouse. These architectural embellishments in the shape of a steer head enhance the overall look and feel of the building and resonate with motorists who have come to familiarize themselves with the Longhorn Steakhouse brand, which will alleviate any confusion caused by nearby freestanding signs and other various building signage. We have proposed steer head architectural elements on two elevations as opposed to all four elevations for Glory Days Grill. A business in this heavily populated commercial corridor requires appropriate branding for motorists to travel safely and efficiently to their desired destination. With that being said, Longhorn Steakhouse has not been allowed a freestanding sign to properly alert motorists of the general area of the restaurant leading them within the visibility cones of the branding elements on the building to lead them to the parking areas safely and efficiently. In order to counteract the lack of a freestanding sign, Longhorn Steakhouse is respectfully requesting channel letters on all four elevations for a smooth transfer of information to alleviate any hardships during wayfinding for motorists in the heavily populated commercial corridor.

(c) Requirements for all variances. A variance may not be granted unless it is found that:

(1) the variance is the minimum variance necessary to afford relief; and

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse is in a unique situation where they are located on a small tract of land with no freestanding signage to alert motorists of the general location of the restaurant to maneuver to the property safely and effectively. There is also a freestanding sign adjacent to the property alerting motorists of eight other businesses in the immediate area. In order to alleviate that hardship and possible confusion for motorists, Longhorn Steakhouse respectfully requests branding elements on all four elevations in order to allow motorists to easily identify the building which is accessible from all directions via roadways and parking lots within the Southdale Center.

More specifically, motorists require adequate notice of all businesses to easily make decisions when navigating throughout the corridor. When approaching Longhorn Steakhouse from the Northeast on Governor Ritchie Hwy heading Southwest bound, the rear elevation channel letters are essential for



motorists to make the proper turn onto Mountain Road to access the parking area for Longhorn Steakhouse.

(2) the granting of the variance will not:

(i) alter the essential character of the neighborhood or district in which the lot is located;

Response:

The essential character of the neighborhood or district in which the lot is located will not be altered in any way. Longhorn Steakhouse is respectfully requesting appropriate signage that is under the 10% and 400ft² requirements while remaining consistent within the corridor compared to like businesses since Longhorn Steakhouse will not have presence on any freestanding signs. The code allowed wall signage would include three channel letter sets at 120ft² each, while also including two steer head logos at 19.7ft² each. While the proposed package we are respectfully requesting is under the code allowed 400ft² or 10% per façade.

(ii) substantially impair the appropriate use or development of adjacent property;

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse is respectfully requesting branding elements that are appropriate for the building due to the small tract of land and potentially confusing freestanding signage adjacent to Longhorn Steakhouse's property. Longhorn Steakhouse is requesting a branding element package that will allow the restaurant to be easily identifiable while not hindering the appropriate use or development of adjacent properties.

(iii) reduce forest cover in the limited development and resource conservation areas of the critical area;

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse's request will not reduce forest cover in the limited development and resource conservation areas of the critical area since Longhorn Steakhouse is not located in the critical area.

(iv) be contrary to acceptable clearing and replanting practices required for development in the critical area or a bog protection area; nor

Response:

Longhorn Steakhouse's request will not be contrary to acceptable clearing and replanting practices required for development in the critical area or a bog protection area since Longhorn Steakhouse is not located in either of these areas.



(v) be detrimental to the public welfare.

Response:

In an effort to allow motorists to navigate this commercially zoned corridor, signage is an important aspect of these types of zones and allows for a smooth transfer of information so motorists can safely and effectively navigate the corridor. In no way is the amount of signage inappropriate for this property as there are multiple businesses with similar amounts of signage all while being identified on freestanding signs, as well. Longhorn Steakhouse is proposing a sign package that separates the building from the crowded commercially signed area and enables potential consumers to decide where to make the appropriate turns to arrive at their desired destination.

AERIAL



Restaurant #22L0052 7941 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie, MD 21061

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ELEVATION PHOTOS

Front Elevation



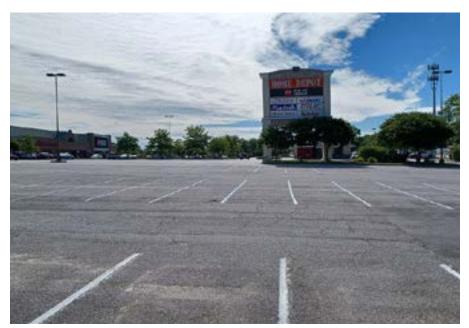
Left Elevation



Right Elevation



Rear Elevation



Left Rear Elevation





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Right Rear Elevation



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APPROACH PHOTOS

Heading Northbound on Mountain Rd



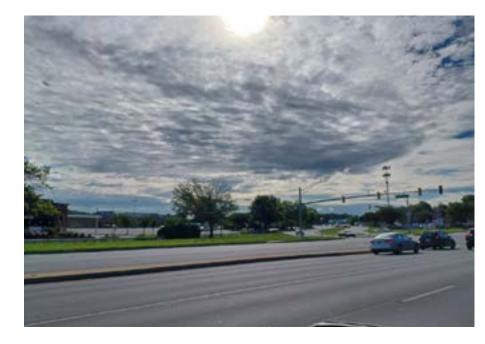




Heading Southbound on Governor Ritchie Hwy







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COMPETITOR SIGNS

1 GLORY DAYS GRILL • Three Wall Signs



2 STARBUCKS

Three Wall Signs One Freestanding Drive Thru Sign •



3 CHIPOTLE • Four Wall Signs



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CRITICAL ISSUES

- Variance required for Signs C & F to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage. Allowed (2) signed elevations, proposing (4).
- No ground signage proposed per Jason Holland's directive.
- Slight visibility issues to the site due to vegetation when traveling on Governor Ritchie Hwy

BRANDBOOK HISTORY

Initial: 04/25/23 Rev 1: 06/28/23 - Inserted updated elevations Rev 2: 03/22/24 - Updated code/recs/variance info Restaurant #22L0052

7941 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie, MD 21061



Sign Summary	3
Site Plan	5
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Elevation Photos	11

- Approach Photos
- **Competitor Signs**
- Appendix



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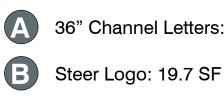
Code Overview

Jurisdiction: County of Anne Arundel Zone: C3 - General Commercial

- Building Signage:
- Wall Signage:
 - The mumber of wall signs allowed is not regulated so long as the
 - SF allowance is not exceeded.
 - Signage may only be placed on (2) elevations.
 - NTE 10% attached facade area, NTE 200 SF/facade.
 - NTE 2' projection.
- Window Signage
 - Number allowed is not regulated.
 - NTE 30% of window area.
 - Permits are required.
- Construction Signs:
 - Permit is not required.
 - Must be removed once construction is complete.
 - NTE 24 SF.
- Special Event/Grand Opening Signs:
 - Permits not required.
 - NTE 60 days.
 - A temp sign on site w/>500' frontage or sign applies to 11+
 - adjacent lots NTE 64 SF. Otherwise, a temp sign NTE 24 SF in all but residential districts.

- Ground Signage
- Freestanding Signage:
 - Monument and pylons are allowed.
 - NTE 1/street frontage.
 - NTE 1 SF/1' lineal street frontage. NTE 250 SF.
 - NTE 30' OAH.
 - Must be setback 0' from ROW and/or property lines.
- Directional Signage:
 - Number allowed is not regulated.
 - NTE 6 SF.
 - NTE 5' OAH.
 - Permit required if over 4 SF.
 - To-Go Parking Signage
 - Parking signs are regulated as directionals.
 - Permits required if over 4 SF.
 - Number is not regulated.
 - NTE 6 SF, NTE 5' OAH.

Confident Signs



D)

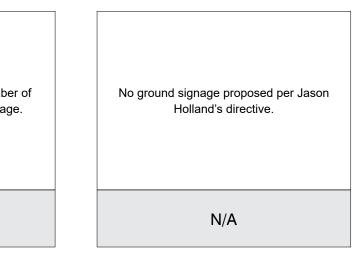
Steer Logo: 19.7 SF

Municipal/Landlord Allowed Sign Package

FRONT ELEVAT	ION	LEFT ELEVATION	RIGHT ELEVATION	REAR ELEVATION
A LONGHOR steakhous	AN sie	Variance required to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage.	D LONGHORN steakhouse	Variance required to exceed numb
8				elevations allowed to have signa
36" Longhorn w/ 12" S 45" Steerhea		N/A	36" Longhorn w/ 12" Steakhouse 45" Steerhead	N/A

- 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF
- 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF

FREESTANDING SIGN



Approval Overview

Permits

- Building and Electrical permit required.
- Permits can be applied via mail or in person.
- Authorized agents can apply.
- Fees are based on valuation.
- LOA Required.
- SEDs required upon request.
- Permit review estimated to take 2-3 weeks. ٠

Variance

- Administrative Hearing Office hears variance
- Every two weeks, either Tuesday or Thursday of 1st and 3rd week of each month.
- No pre-application meeting required
- 1 public hearing is required.
- \$35 per sign + \$480 application fee
- Variance process typically takes 3-4 months.

Confident Signs

36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF



- 36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF
- Steer Logo: 19.7 SF

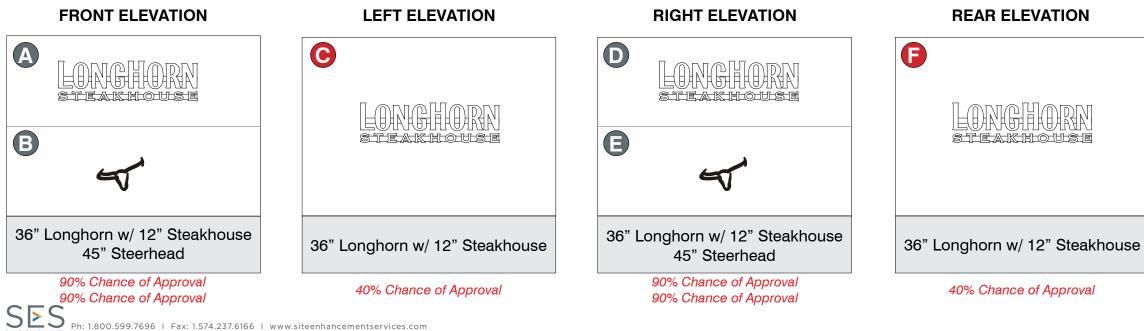


C



F

SES Proposed Sign Package



Potential Signs

36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF

Variance required to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage. Sign provides building identification to traffic along Mountain Rd. & Governor Ritchie Hwy.

36" Channel Letters: 68.9 SF

Variance required to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage. Sign provides building identification within the center, and to Southeast-bound traffic on Governor Ritchie Hwy.

FREESTANDING SIGN

No ground signage proposed per Jason Holland's directive. N/A

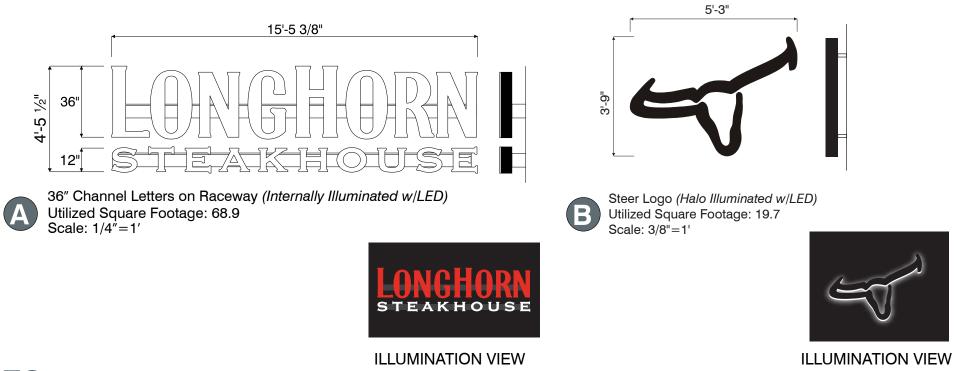
FRONT ELEVATION

Signage on front elevation allowed by code.



Measurements based on architectural plans provided. Measurements to be field verified.

Scale: 3/32"=1"





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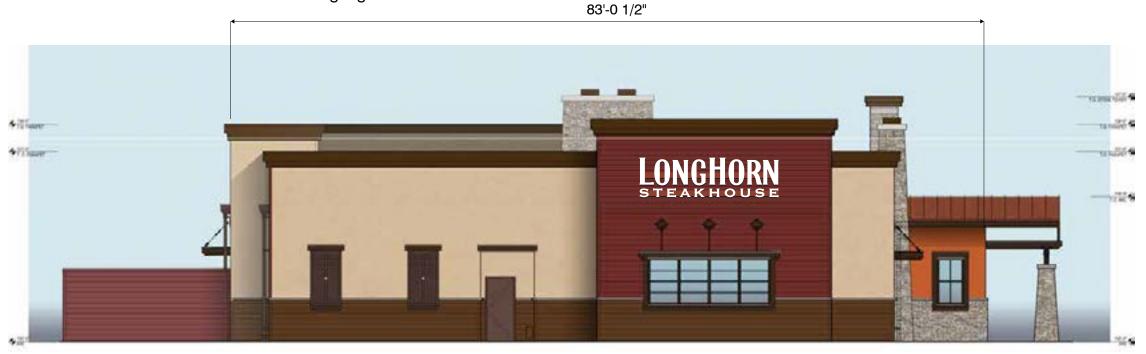


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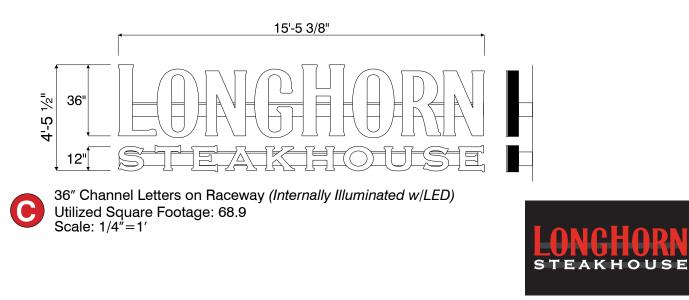
LEFT ELEVATION

Variance Required

Variance required to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage.



Measurements based on architectural plans provided. Measurements to be field verified.



Ph: 1.800.599.7696 | Fax: 1.574.237.6166 | www.siteenhancementservices.com

ILLUMINATION VIEW



Scale: 3/32"=1'



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RIGHT ELEVATION

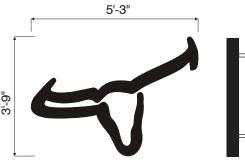
Signage on right elevation allowed by code.



Measurements based on architectural plans provided. Measurements to be field verified.



ILLUMINATION VIEW

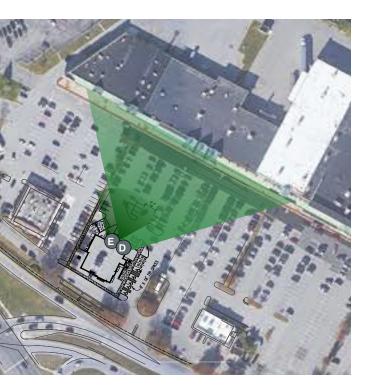


Steer Logo (Halo Illuminated w/LED) Utilized Square Footage: 19.7 Scale: 3/8"=1'





Scale: 3/32"=1'



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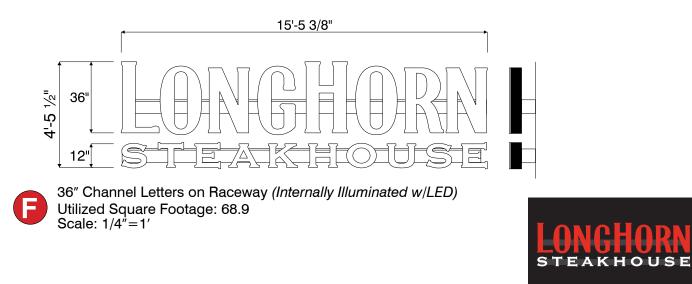
REAR ELEVATION

Variance Required

Variance required to exceed number of elevations allowed to have signage.



Measurements based on architectural plans provided. Measurements to be field verified.



ILLUMINATION VIEW

Scale: 3/32"=1'



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APPENDIX



SIGN TYPE: LH-36RWLTR-XLED / INTERNALLY ILLUMINATED CHANNEL LETTERS ON RACEWAYS / 68.9 SQ.FT.

SCALE : 1/2" = 1'-0"

"LONGHORN":

FACES: #2283 RED ACRYLIC W/ WHITE PERFORATED VINYL APPLIED 1ST SURFACE (LETTERS TO APPEAR WHITE DURING DAY & RED AT NIGHT). **RETURNS**: 5" DEEP, PRE-FINISHED BLACK ALUMINUM W/ BLACK TRIMCAP. **NOTE**: INTERIOR OF LETTERS TO BE PAINTED W/ WHITE LIGHT ENHANCEMENT PAINT. **ILLUMINATION**: GE RED LED MODULES.

"STEAKHOUSE":

FACES: #7328 WHITE ACRYLIC.

RETURNS: 5" DEEP, PRE-FINISHED BLACK ALUMINUM W/ BLACK TRIMCAP. **NOTE:** INTERIOR OF LETTERS TO BE PAINTED W/ WHITE LIGHT ENHANCEMENT PAINT. **ILLUMINATION:** GE WHITE LED MODULES.

CUSTOMER TO PROVIDE:

(For New / Remodel Construction) ADEQUATE BEHIND THE WALL BACKING AND ACCESS AS REQUIRED TO INSTALL SIGNAGE. CUSTOMER TO FORWARD COPY OF FINAL APPROVED SIGNAGE DRAWINGS TO BUILDING SITE CONTACT SO THAT THESE PROVISIONS CAN BE MADE DURING CONSTRUCTION AND PRIOR TO SIGN INSTALLATION. ALL BRANCH (PRIMARY ELECTRICAL SERVICE) CIRCUITS & FINAL CONNECTION TO EACH SIGN (WITHIN 5 FT.) TO BE BY CERTIFIED ELECTRICIAN: A. All branch circuits for signs must be totally dedicated to signs (including dedicated ground and dedicated neutral per circuit).

- B. Sign circuits must not be shared with other loads such as lighting, air conditioning, and other equipment. C. Property sized ground wire that can be traced back to the breaker panel must be provided.
- D. Number and size of circuits for each sign to meet Federal Heath Sign's requirement.
- Any deviation from the above recommendations may result in:
- Damage to or improper operation of the sign(s).
 Delays and additional costs.

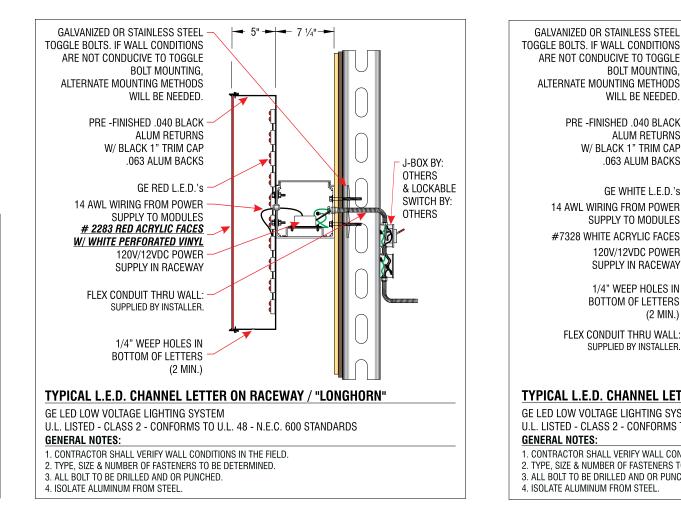
Notes:

- ③ Certain electrical components of signs will fail prematurely if signs are not shut-off for a period of time, once, each day. For best performance, we recommend signs to be connected to an automatic controlling device such as an Energy Management System, Time Clock or Photo Cell that will automatically shut-off the sign for a period of time, each day. Failure to do so will cause damage to the electrical components of the sign and will void the warranty.
- Some dimming devices will also adversely affect sign electrical components, causing failure. Any dimming of the sign without consultation with Federal Heath Sign Co. will void the warranty.

INSTALLER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:

PROVIDING AND INSTALLING ALL COMPONENTS REQUIRED TO RUN SECONDARY WIRING (CONNECTORS, GTO CONDUIT, ETC.) TO BE DETERMINED BY LOCAL CODE AND SITE CONDITIONS.

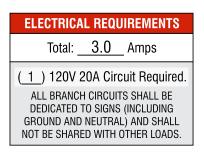
PROVIDING ALL NEEDED INSTALLATION HARDWARE AS DETERMINED BY LOCAL CODE AND SITE CONDITIONS. SEALING BUILDING PENETRATIONS WITH SILICONE TO PREVENT MOISTURE PENETRATION @ EXTERIOR LOCATIONS.

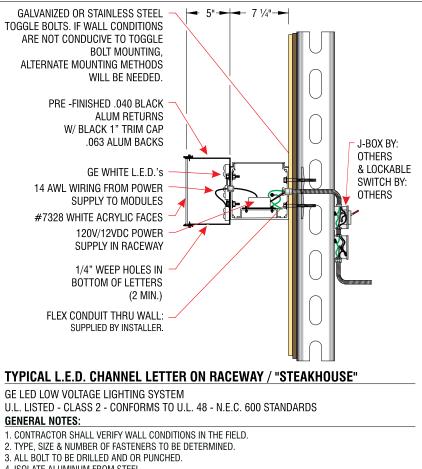


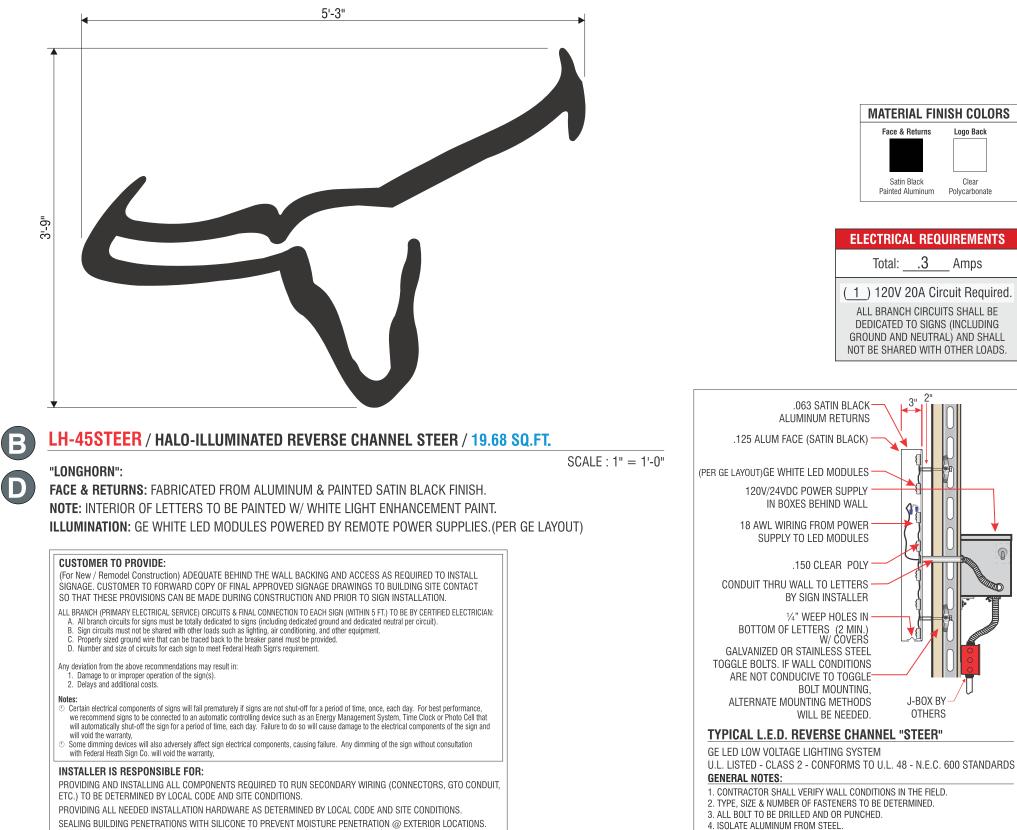
Sign company responsible for choosing raceway color that best matches facade color.











REQUIREMENTS				
.3	Amps			
)A Circuit Required				



J. Howard Beard Health Services Building 3 Harry S. Truman Parkway Annapolis, Maryland 21401 Phone: 410-222-7095 Fax: 410-222-7294 Maryland Relay (TTY): 711 www.aahealth.org

Tonii Gedin, RN, DNP Health Officer

<u>MEMORANDUM</u>

- TO: Sadé Medina, Zoning Applications Planning and Zoning Department, MS-6301
- FROM: Brian Chew, Program Manager Bureau of Environmental Health

DATE: April 5, 2024

- RE: B.F. Saul Real Estate Investment Trust 7941 Ritchie Highway Glen Burnie, MD 21060
- NUMBER: 2024-0054-V
- SUBJECT: Variance/Special Exception/Rezoning

The Health Department has reviewed the above referenced variance to allow identification signs for the name of a tenant in a business complex on more facades than allowed.

The Health Department has reviewed the above-referenced request. The property is served by public water and sewer facilities. The Health Department has no objection to the above-referenced request.

If you have further questions or comments, please contact Brian Chew at 410-222-7413.

cc: Sterling Seay

2024-0054-V

Menu Cancel Help

Task Details Fire Marshal Assigned Date 04/04/2024 Assigned to Robert Flynn Current Status Complete w/ Comments Action By Robert Flynn Comments Defer to OPZ and Inspection and Permits End Time Billable No Time Tracking Start Date In Possession Time (hrs) Estimated Hours 0.0 Comment Display in ACA Image: Record Creator Image: Licensed Professional Image: Contact	Due Date 04/25/2024 Assigned to Department Fire Marshal's Office Status Date 04/08/2024 Overtime No Start Time Hours Spent 0.0 Action by Department Fire Marshal's Office Est. Completion Date Display E-mail Address in ACA Display Comment in ACA
Contact Owner	
Task Specific Information	
Expiration Data Po	view Notes Peviewer Name

Expiration DateReview NotesReviewer NameReviewer Phone NumberReviewer Email

