

Request for Deviation from Design Standards- signage Loomis Centre Development Incentive Zone (DIZ)

Ross Dress For Less

Loomis Centre

NWC S. 27th St. & W. Loomis Rd.
Milwaukee, WI

Background:

Ross Stores, Inc. currently operates over 1,200 Ross Dress For Less stores nationally. These stores have proven to be an asset to the communities they serve. Ross is opening their first locations in the Milwaukee, Green Bay and Eau Claire markets in the next six months. Opening the new Ross Dress For Less store at Loomis Centre is evidence of Ross' plans to partner with the City of Milwaukee, but they find that they need to bolster their identity by increasing the signage entitlements dictated by the City's zoning ordinance. Therefore, as agents of Ross Stores, Inc., we are applying for a variance requesting an increase in the maximum sign area prescribed by the established regulations.

The Ross Dress For Less store at will occupy 25,000 sq. ft. in the newly constructed corner building addition to an existing multi-tenant building at Loomis Center, with a 140'-0" frontage on South 27th Street and a 151'-7" frontage on Morgan Avenue. They will be employing around 50 full and part time employees. In accordance with the Loomis Centre DIZ signage standards, Ross will be subject to a maximum aggregate building wall sign area of 200 sq. ft. Ross is requesting a deviation to this design standard to allow additional square footage of their building wall signage. The area of the proposed wall signs, when calculated per code, are 351 sq. ft. on the front, and 144 sq. ft. on the north side for a total of 495 square feet of building wall signage.

Criteria for Deviation:

1. The purpose of the overlay zone has been met:

Ross Dress For Less is a national retailer that has proven to add vibrancy of the shopping centers in which they are located, attracting people from the vicinity as well as from the entire region. This addresses the purpose of the overlay zone.

Regulations controlling signs are generally written with consideration that most retail businesses abut the street frontage in the traditional manor of retail development. In this case, the front of the store is set back from the street 700 feet. This unique condition must be taken into account when considering the resulting size and proportion of the primary wall sign.

The 200 sq. ft. maximum sign area prescribed by the Loomis Centre DIZ does not take into account tenants with multiple street frontages. Splitting the entitlement between the two frontages would result in small, ineffective signs. We

believe the granting additional sign area for wall signage is consistent with the intent of the zoning regulations for Loomis Centre.

The proposed building wall signs are “Type A” with individual letters.

2. The deviation improves the aesthetics of the site:

The contemporary architectural features of the Ross storefront provide an impressive retail presence and ample background for the proposed wall signage. The proportions and balance are maintained, especially when you consider that the store is setback from South 27th Street by 700 feet. We feel that when a code compliant ROSS DRESS FOR LESS sign is positioned on the large background, it looks disproportionately small, particularly when viewed from such a great distance. These conditions diminish Ross’ presence in the shopping center when compared with nearby businesses located closer to the thoroughfare. Considering the distance from which the sign is viewed, we believe our request is consistent with the intent and purpose of the overlay zone.

If Ross were to comply with the current regulation of 200 sq. ft. maximum aggregate sign area, and split it between the two frontages, it would result in signage that will prove insufficient when viewed from South 27th Street. It’s important that they have a sign size that can be read and recognized from such a long distance and that represents their significant occupancy to the public.

3. If applicable, the deviation addresses one or more unique site features that make the application of the standard impractical:

As pointed out above, Ross will occupy a corner space providing two street frontages, which is unique to the development. In addition, their storefront is set back from the street frontage at such a distance that the impact of a zone compliant wall sign would be significantly diminished.

4. The deviation is consistent with the comprehensive plan:

The comprehensive plan has designated Loomis Centre as a retail destination. The retail environment is pronounced by the tenant mix and associated signage. Ross Stores, Inc. has signed a long-term lease at this location. The proposed signage offers them the assurance that they will be seen and recognized, and assures the City of their sustained success, which is consistent with the goals of the Southwest Side Comprehensive Area Plan.

We believe that the addition of the proposed signage will actually be a material benefit to the public by assisting them in locating the store. *The Signage Sourcebook*, published by the Small Business Administration has documented how properly sized and formatted signs can reduce traffic incidents, finding that

small signs distract the driver because they can't recognize what they're looking for.

Signs are indicative of business activity. The visual impact of this new, dynamic signage will contribute to the retail synergy that the City of Milwaukee wants to promote in their community. The addition of the proposed signs will be in keeping with the tradition of the retail development while offering a refreshed and contemporary design.

We appreciate the opportunity to present our reasoning behind our request for limited relief from the City of Milwaukee's regulations. We feel that the purposes and intent of the Loomis Centre DIZ would be advanced by the requested deviations from the requirements and the benefits of such a deviation will substantially outweigh the detriment that would result in ineffective identification.

With this deviation request, Ross Stores, Inc. is seeking to remedy the perception the smaller sign would promulgate. It would also signify the relative importance Ross Stores Inc. will play in the local economy.