

City of Detroit

Alton James
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Vice Chair/Secretary

Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
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David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Gregory Pawlowski
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Angy Webb
Henry Williams

October 29, 2020

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Request of Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) for PCA (Public Center Adjacent) Special District Review of a proposed Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus which is located at 901 W. Fort Street. **(RECOMMEND APPROVAL W/CONDITIONS)**

REQUEST

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received a request from the Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) for PCA (Public Center Adjacent) Special District Review of a proposed Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus at 901 W. Fort Street. This request is being made consistent with the provisions of Section 50-3-222 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The petitioner is requesting the approval of a Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus. Drawings showing the size and location of each sign are attached for reference. The work is divided into three phases:

Phase 1 – Seven signs were reviewed and approved in October 2019 and have been installed.

Phase 2 – Five signs are proposed to be installed this year.

Phase 3 – Five signs are proposed to be installed in the future. (By having these signs reviewed now, an additional review will not be necessary unless there are changes.)

Per Section 4-4-7(e) of the Detroit City Code, signs for a campus composed of multiple buildings are evaluated as if each building were a separate business. Each building is allowed 2.6 square feet of signage per linear foot of frontage up to a maximum of 500 square feet per building. However, these restrictions don't apply to developments that require City Council approval per Section 4-4-7(a) and are provided here as a guideline.

Office Building – The Office Building is the five-story structure located at the corner of West Fort and Third Streets. A total of four signs are allocated to this building—three wall signs installed in phase 1 and one monument sign which is existing and will be re-faced in phase 2. The total area of these signs is 570 square feet which is slightly above the 500 square foot general maximum but is well below the 873 square feet that would be allowed based on the building's frontage.

Main Building – The Main Building is located in the center of campus and is a sprawling two-story, concrete structure. Despite having the largest footprint of the campus, the Fort Street façade is somewhat nondescript and easy to miss. A total of six signs are allocated to this building—one wall sign installed in phase 1, one wall sign proposed in phase 2, and four future signs. The total area of these signs is 700 square feet which is well above the 500 square foot maximum but much less than the 1170 square feet allowed based on the building’s frontage. Additionally, these signs would not all be visible from one vantage point as they are located on different sides of the building.

One of the proposed signs includes a 141 square foot electronic message board facing the Lodge Freeway. The sign will be visible to north-bound traffic from the Congress Street entrance ramp to the Fort Street overpass. Generally, the electronic message board portion of a sign cannot exceed 25% of the total area of the sign, but this restriction does not apply to developments that require City Council approval per Section 4-4-5(3). The proposed sign is 68% electronic message board. Because the sign is oriented to the freeway, MDOT has reviewed and approved the proposed sign.

Health & Wellness Education and Sports Center – The new Health & Wellness Education building was completed last year and is located on the western part of the campus at the corner of Sixth Street. A total of four signs are allocated to this building—three wall signs installed in phase 1 and one wall sign proposed in phase 2. The total area of these signs is 850 square feet which exceeds both the 500 square foot maximum and the 819 square feet allowed based on the building’s frontage. Although the area of the signs is high, one is located on the back of the building and is not visible from Fort Street. The three signs on the front of the building are evenly distributed along the façade as to not be overwhelming.

Miscellaneous – Several wayfinding signs are proposed that are not associated with any particular building. A total of three signs are proposed with a total area of 240 square feet. The proposed locations of the signs are:

- In the parking lot on West Jefferson between the Joe Louis Parking Garage and the Sixth Street overpass (110 square feet)
- In the plaza near Fort Street, between the Main and Office Buildings (110 square feet)
- In the parking lot on West Fort at the western edge of campus (20 square feet)

These signs are incidental and designed to assist pedestrians and drivers with navigating campus. Each of the two larger signs incorporates an electronic message board of 18 square feet which is 15% of the total sign.

REVIEW & ANALYSIS – PCA District Review Criteria

There are eighteen PCA District Review Criteria listed in Section 50-11-97 of the Zoning Ordinance. Only one applies specifically to signage:

(11) Signage and graphics should be tastefully designed to be visually appealing and in character with surrounding development; they should provide needed information, direction and orientation in a clear and concise manner.

Until the installation of the phase 1 signs last year, WCCCD’s Downtown Campus had very little signage and was not easy to identify. Appropriate signage is necessary to assist the public in locating an important institution. Although several of the signs are rather large, due to the size of the buildings and the nature of the use, additional signage is reasonable.

Design

The Planning & Development Department (PDD) has reviewed the proposed signage and recommends approval. During the review process, PDD staff recommended lowering the height of three proposed ground signs from 20' to 15' high. Initially, WCCCD insisted that the height was necessary for the signs to be visible from a distance and to keep the electronic message board component high enough to discourage vandalism. PDD did not agree and the City Planning Commission recommended further discussion and research which eventually led to the proposed signs being reduced to 15' high.

City Planning Commission Concerns

When the sign package was presented to the City Planning Commission at its September 10, 2020 meeting, concerns were raised that the proposed signage did not sufficiently identify the campus at part of the Wayne County Community College District. The addition of WCCCD logos were requested, especially for the sign identified as B-5 which is visible from the southbound Lodge Freeway. A revised Master Sign Plan was submitted adding logos to several of the buildings including the specifically-requested one.

Commissioners also agreed with PDD that the 20' ground signs were out-of-scale with the surroundings and too large for their pedestrian-oriented nature. The applicant submitted a precedent study showing several nearby signs as a comparison. PDD did not agree that the presented signs were similar—two signs (Ally and GM) are located in the heart of downtown where the context is significantly different as the buildings are much larger and the volume of vehicle and pedestrian traffic is much greater; the other sign (near Wayne State) is oriented to freeway traffic not pedestrians.

Additional studies were then submitted by the applicant showing the proposed signs at 15', 17' and 20' high. They also reiterated that the 20' height is necessary to quickly inform visitors and multi-lingual students, to provide lighting and safety at night, to reduce vandalism to the digital screens, and that the 15' height is too small for the scale of the plaza and adjacent buildings. However, shortly before the CPC meeting, the applicant agreed to reduce the signs to 15' high.

REVISED RECOMMENDATION & CONDITIONS

On October 15, 2020, the City Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the proposed Master Sign Plan for WCCCD Downtown Campus with the following conditions:

1. The three proposed ground signs identified as A-1, A-3, and A3-2 shall be a maximum of 15' high as measured from the base of the sign.
2. The electronic message boards shall be operated solely as on-premises signs and display messages or images related to WCCCD activities and events only.
3. The electronic message boards shall only display static images and not flashing, moving or animated images.
4. Each image or message shall be displayed for a minimum of eight (8) seconds.
5. The sign shall be equipped with an ambient light monitor to automatically adjust the intensity of the illumination based on ambient light conditions, specifically:
 - a. During daylight hours, luminance must not exceed 3,500 nits.
 - b. Between sunset and sunrise, luminance must not exceed 160 nits.

A resolution approving this requests is attached for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

ALTON JAMES, CHAIRPERSON

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marcell R. Todd, Jr.".

Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director
Jamie J. Murphy, Staff

Attachment: Master Sign Plan for WCCCD Downtown Campus - final
PDD Recommendation

cc: Arthur Jemison, Director, PDD
Katy Trudeau, Deputy Director, PDD
Russell Baltimore, Assistant Director Design Review
David Bell, Director, BSEED

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ALTERATIONS IN A PCA ZONING DISTRICT
AT THE WCCCD DOWNTOWN CAMPUS, 901 W. FORT ST.**

BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____ :

WHEREAS, the Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) Downtown Campus is located within an established PCA (Public Center Adjacent) zoning district; and

WHEREAS, the WCCCD is an important community institution and requires appropriate signage to assist the public in locating the campus and its components; and

WHEREAS, work to be performed within a PCA zoning district requires Special District Review and the purpose of the PCA zoning district classification is provided for in Section 50-11-81 of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

This district includes property in close proximity to the Public Center (PC) District, and the controls specified in this division are designed to prevent any uses or structures within the district from having a deleterious effect upon the public center. Uses in this district shall include, to the maximum extent possible, ground-floor commercial space or other space oriented to pedestrian traffic, to enhance the public streetscape and street-level activity; and

WHEREAS, the WCCCD has requested Special District Review and approval for a Master Sign Plan showing a total of 17 signs, seven of which were previously approved and installed; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has received the recommendation of the City Planning Commission in the report dated October 28, 2020 as well as the report of the Planning & Development Department;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Detroit City Council hereby authorizes the installation of 10 additional signs on the WCCCD Downtown Campus as described in the previously discussed report with the following conditions:

1. The three proposed ground signs identified as A-1, A-3, and A3-2 shall be a maximum of 15' high as measured from the base of the sign.
2. The electronic message boards shall be operated solely as on-premises signs and display messages or images related to WCCCD activities and events only.
3. The electronic message boards shall only display static images and not flashing, moving or animated images.
4. Each image or message shall be displayed for a minimum of eight (8) seconds.
5. The sign shall be equipped with an ambient light monitor to automatically adjust the intensity of the illumination based on ambient light conditions, specifically:
 - a. During daylight hours, luminance must not exceed 3,500 nits.
 - b. Between sunset and sunrise, luminance must not exceed 160 nits.
6. That final signage plans be reviewed by CPC staff for consistency with approval prior to application be made for applicable permits.



Detroit City Planning Commission
208 CAYMC
Detroit, MI 48226

September 1, 2020

Commissioners:

Following is the review by the Planning and Development Department of the proposed comprehensive sign plan for the Wayne County Community College campus located on W. Fort Street. As the property is zoned PCA (Public Center Adjacent), this review is required under Sec. 50-11-66.

The relevant PCA criteria from Sec. 50-11-67 seem to be the following, with our analysis following in italics:

Criterion 2: Scale, form, massing and density should be appropriate to the nature of the project and relate well to surrounding development: *The scale of requested pylon signs A1 and A3 appear excessive in height (20 feet) and taller than required.*

Criterion 3: The proposed development should be compatible with surrounding development in terms of land use, general appearance and function and should not adversely affect the value of adjacent properties: *The appearance of the signs appears consistent with the colors of the WCCCD campus and with the existing signs.*

Criterion 11: Signage and graphics should be tastefully designed to be visually appealing and in character with surrounding development; they should provide needed information, direction and orientation in a clear and concise manner: *The materials proposed signs are consistent with the building materials of the campus. The reverse halo-lit channel letters and dual-lit day/night films are tasteful, and only a limited amount of LED signage is requested.*

Criterion 15: Urban design elements of form and character should be carefully considered; such elements include, but are not limited to: richness/interest of public areas through the provision of storefronts, window displays, landscaping, and artwork; color, texture and quality of structural materials; enclosure of public spaces; variations in scale; squares, plazas and/or "vest pocket parks" where appropriate; continuity of experience, visual activity and interest; articulation and highlighting of important visual features; preservation/enhancement of important views and vistas. *Again, the pylon signs are of a height appropriate for view from a vehicle from a considerable distance away, as opposed to the more appropriate pedestrian scale.*

To give the Commission a complete picture, when asked about this, the applicant replied "WCCCD wanted their Main ID pylon signs to create a safe haven / informative beacon in

otherwise desolate areas of their campus, especially at night. The intent is to quickly direct multi-lingual students and visitors from across Fort St. The college also needed the height of the signs to push the important and informative video panels further from the ground to prevent vandalism.”

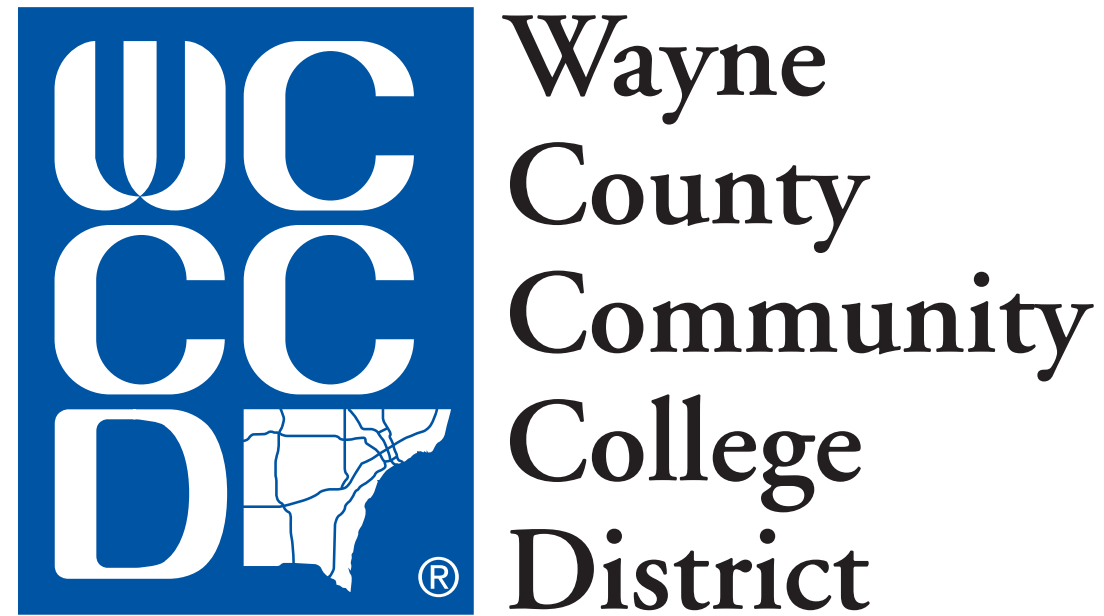
For the reasons listed above, the Planning and Development Department supports the requested WCCCD signs with the condition that signs A-1 and A-3 be reduced in height. We appreciate the opportunity to review a sign package so as to avoid multiple reviews of future signs.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gregory Moots".

Gregory Moots, Lead Planner
Design and Development Innovation
Planning and Development Department

CC: Karen Gage



Curtis L. Ivery
Central Educational Complex

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Wayne County Community
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Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job#	Sheet#
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Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

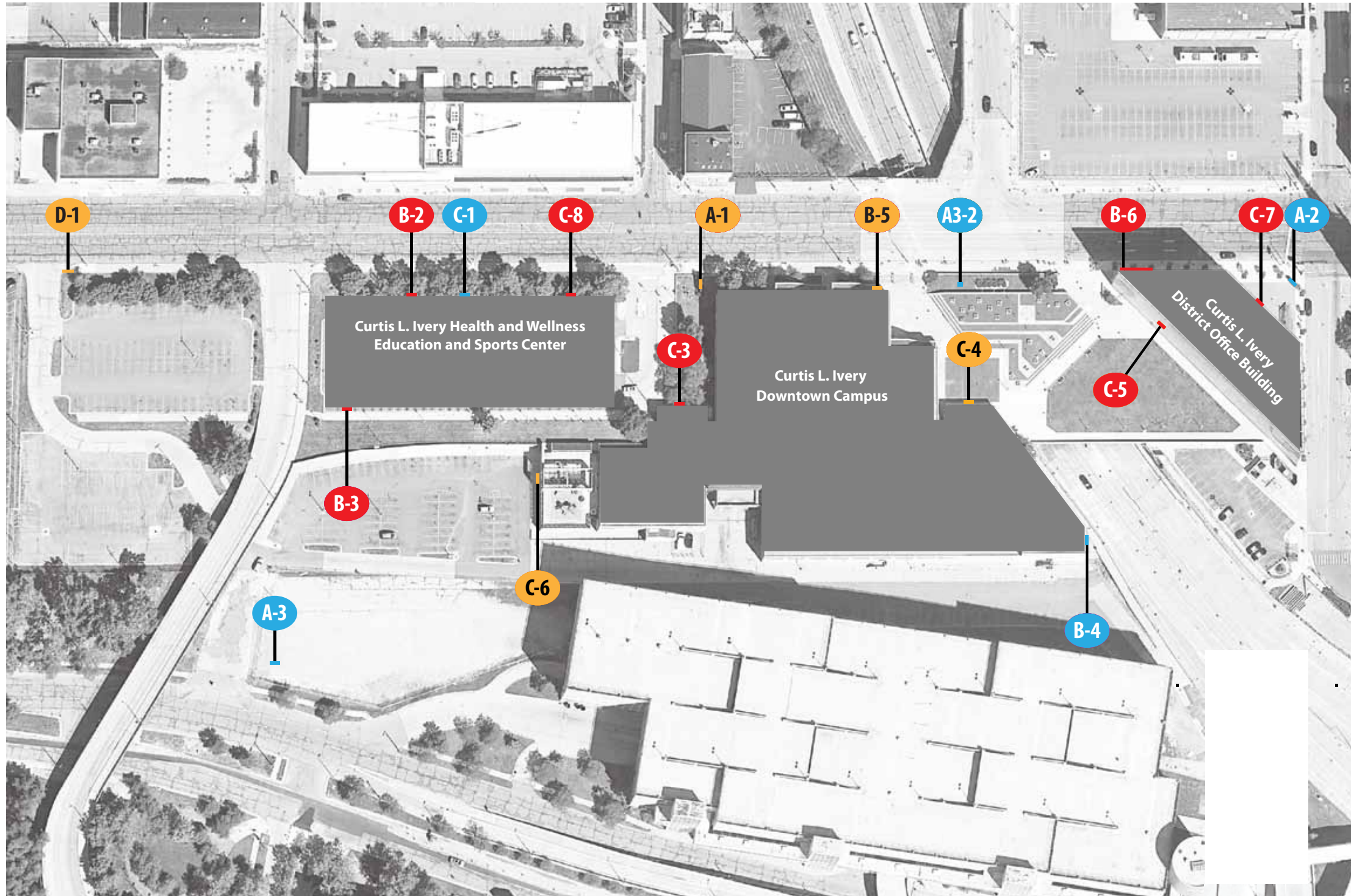
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**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**



LEGEND

Installed in 2019

- B-2
- B-3
- B-6
- C-3
- C-5
- C-7
- C-8

To be installed in 2020

- A-2
- A-3
- A3-2
- B-4
- C-1

Future Signs

- A-1
- B-5
- C-4
- C-6
- D-1

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A-1 Future Sign



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00000	2 of 18

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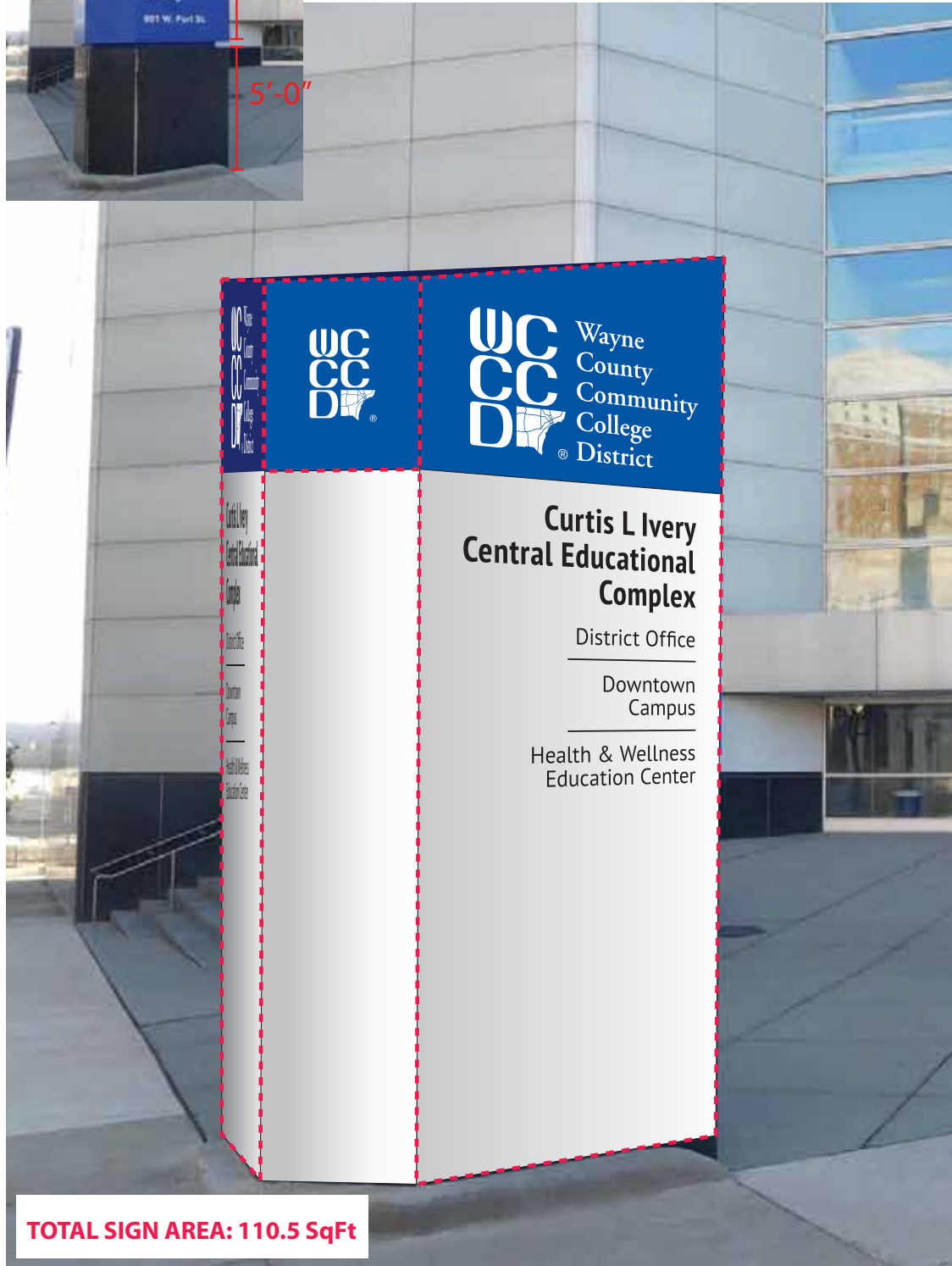
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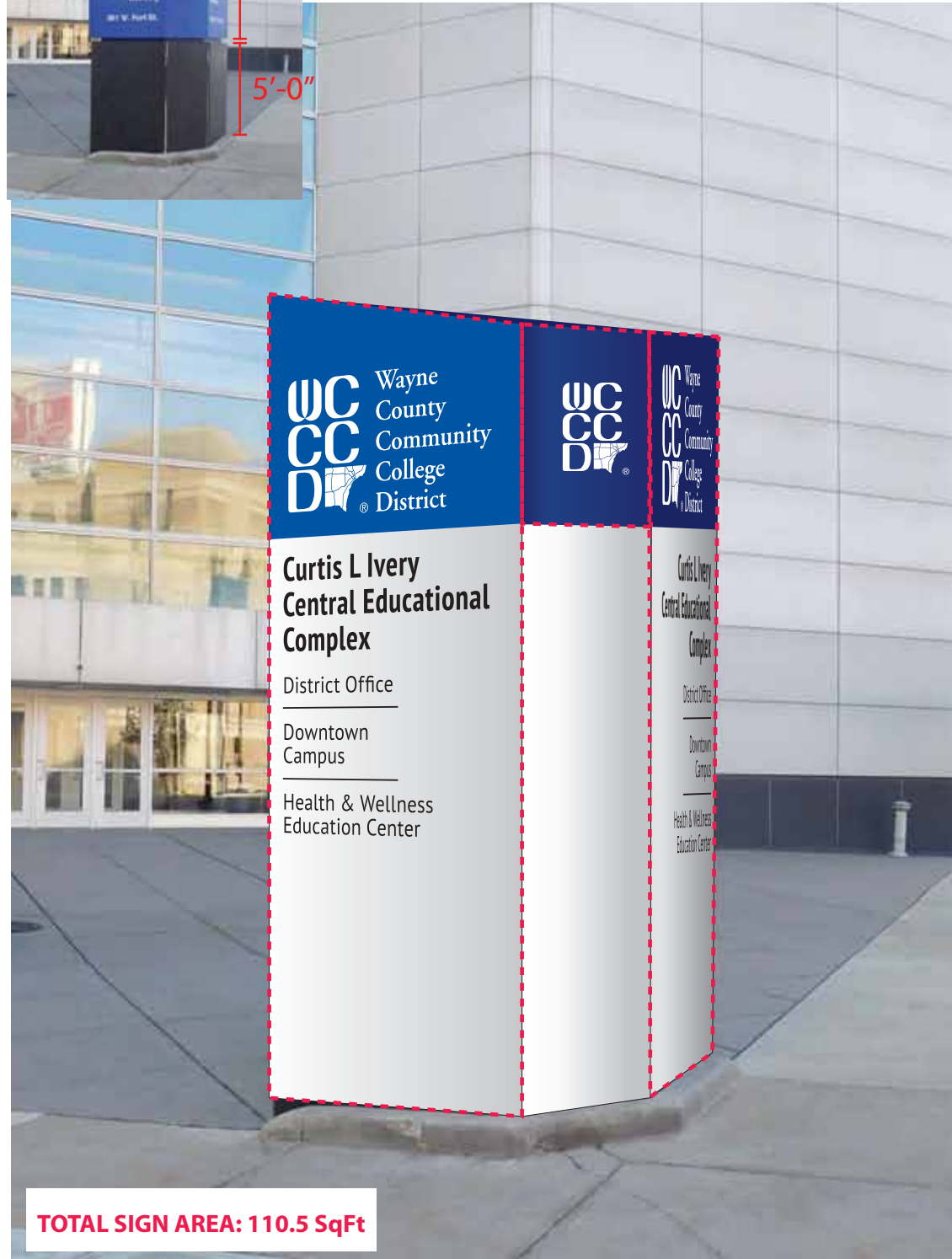
A-2 Install in 2020



1. Refurbish existing sign with new panels.
2. Flat graphics with aluminum panels.
3. Cover all three sides and top with new panels.
4. Contractor to field verify sizes.



TOTAL SIGN AREA: 110.5 SqFt



TOTAL SIGN AREA: 110.5 SqFt

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Designer:
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Scale:
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00000 3 of 18

Revision # **Date:**
5 10-26-20

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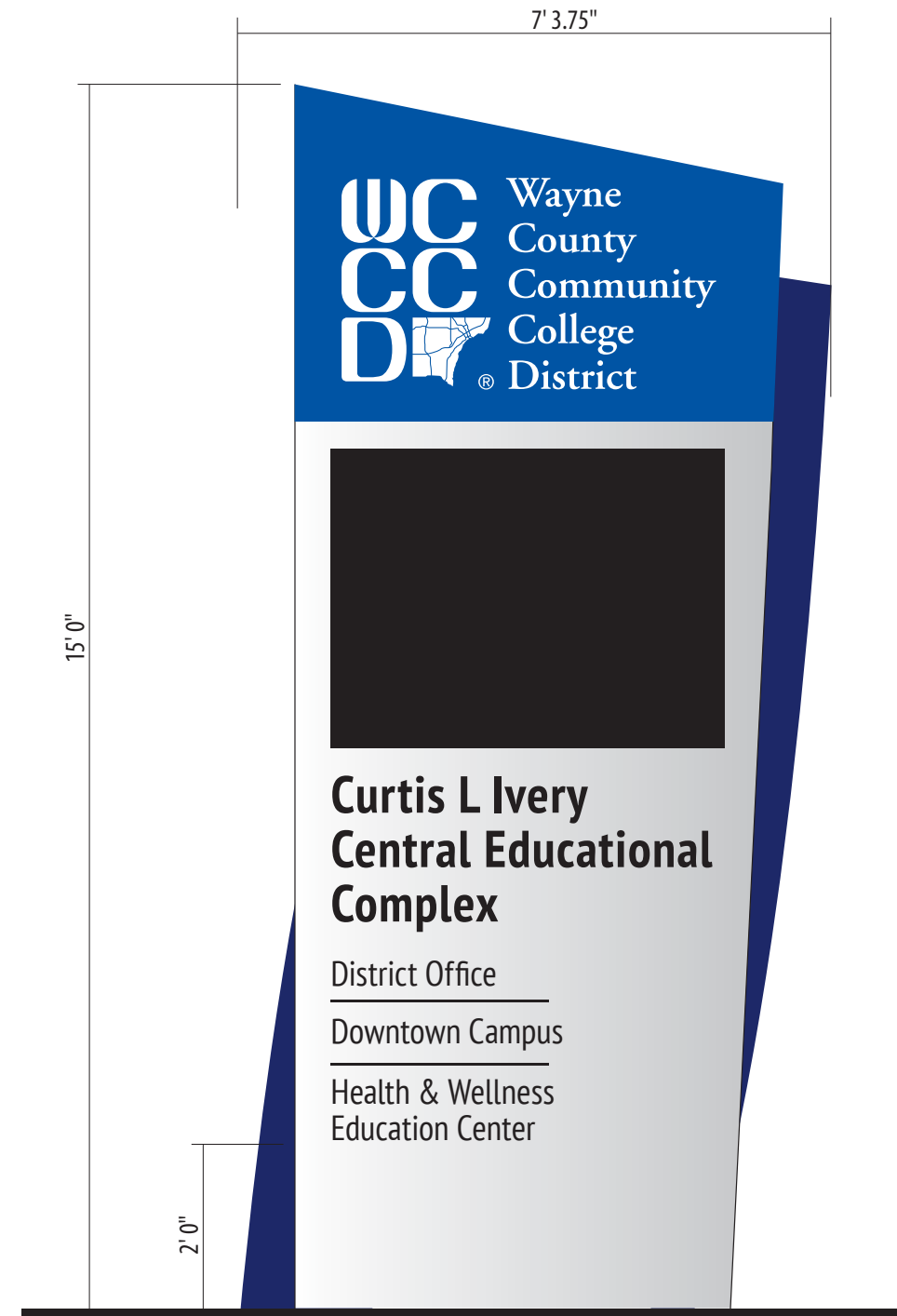
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A-3 Install in 2020



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00000	4 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

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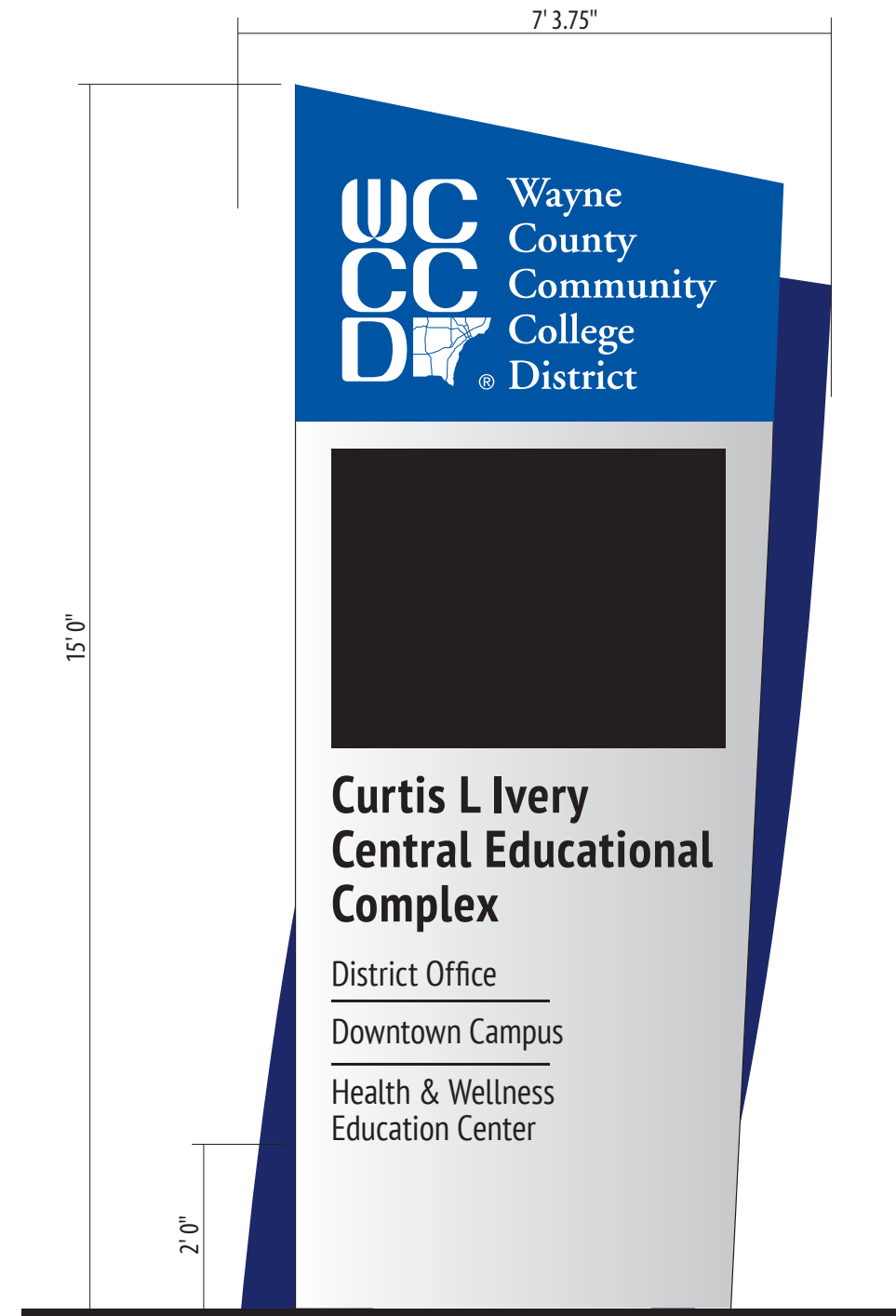
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A3-2 Install in 2020



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Job#	Sheet#
00000	5 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

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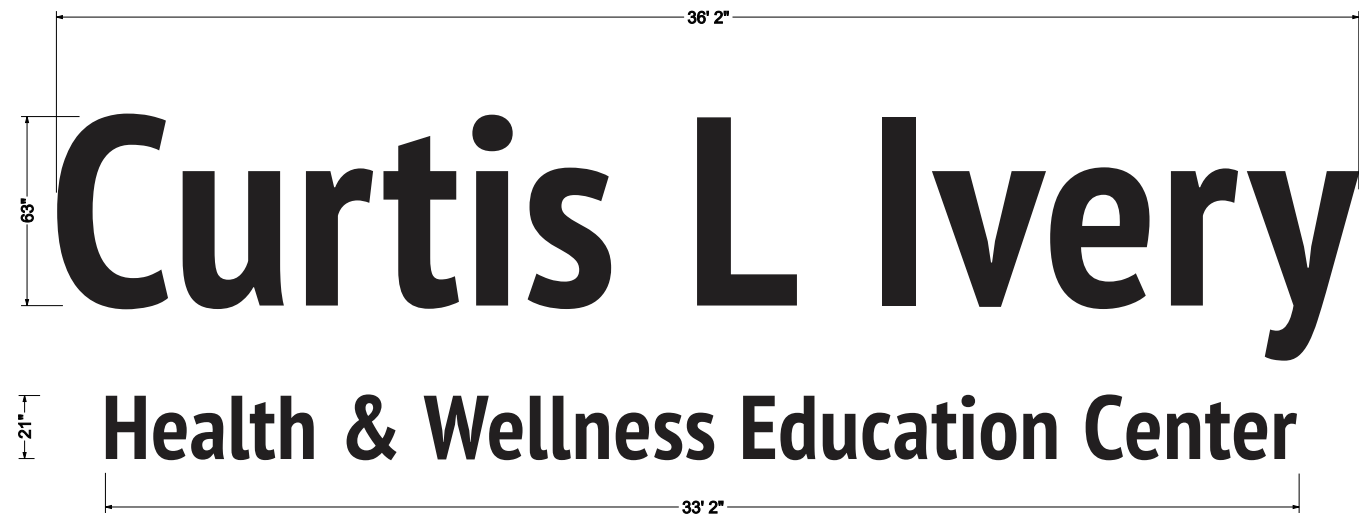
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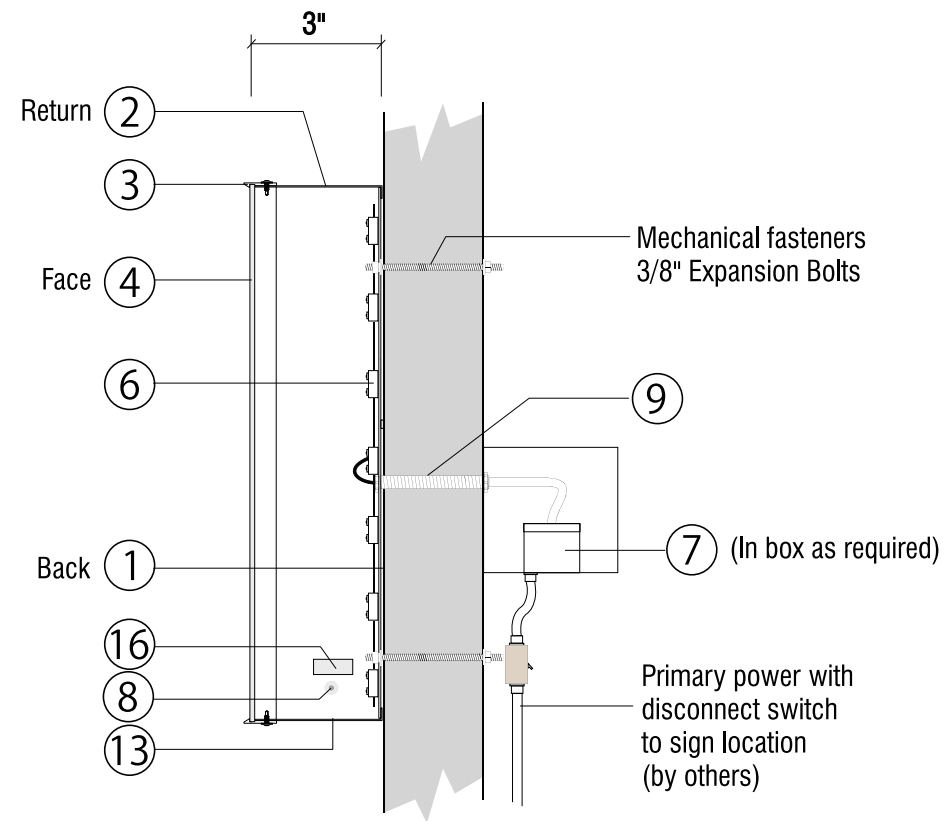
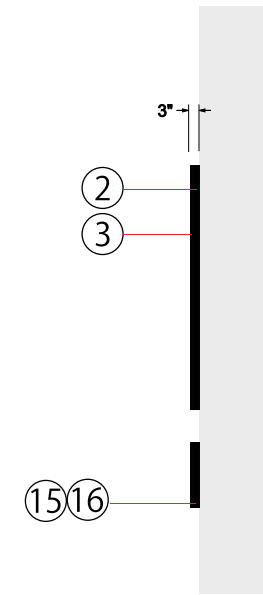
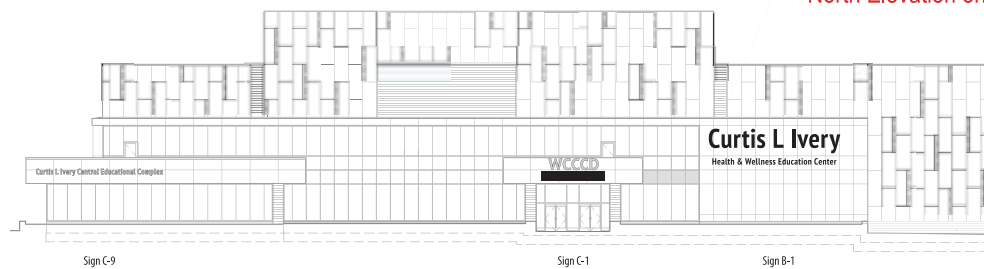
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B-2 Existing, Installed in 2019



NOTE: 3M 3635-222 Day/Night vinyl on the North Elevation only



SECTION DETAIL (N.T.S.)



Wayne County Community
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Date:
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File:
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Scale:
N/A

Job# 00000 **Sheet#** 6 of 18

Revision # 5 **Date:** 10-26-20

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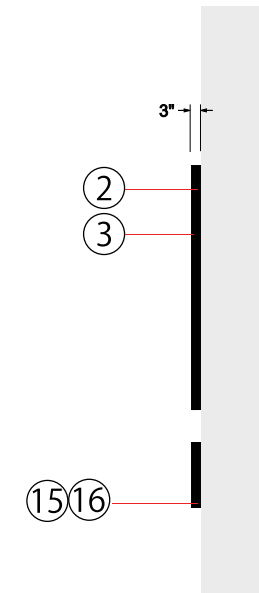
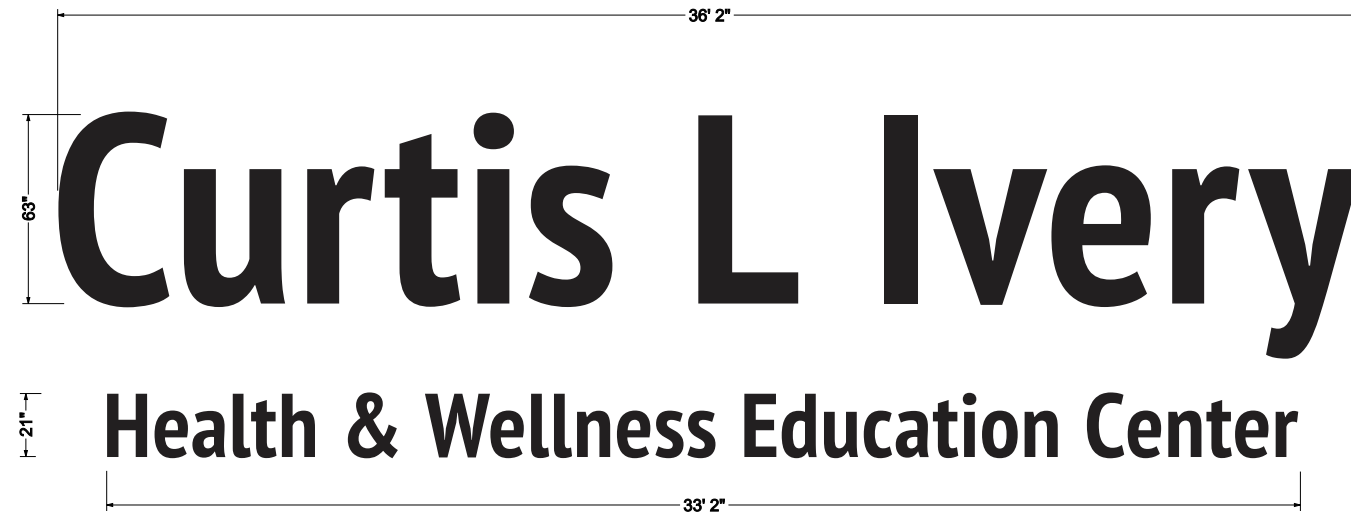
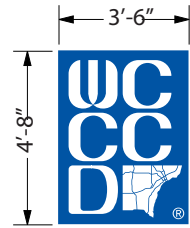
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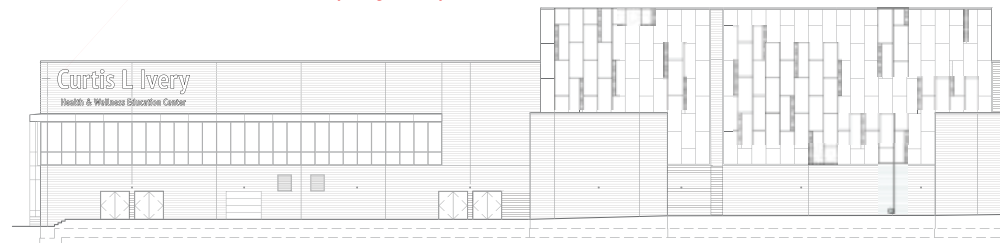
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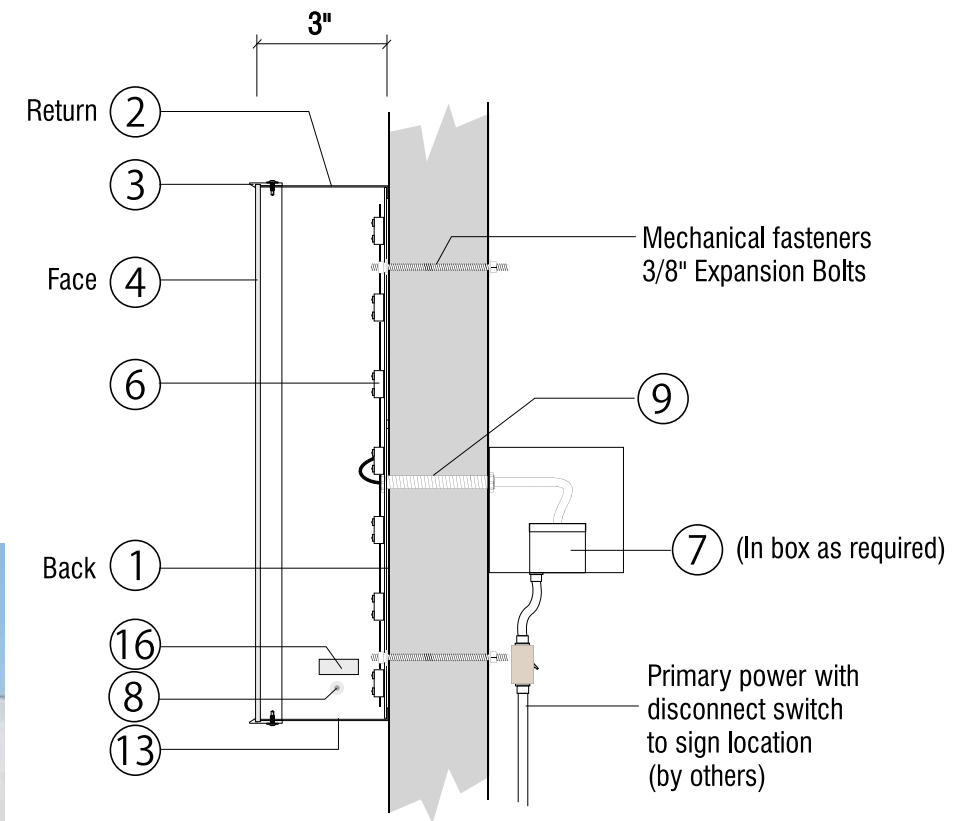
B-3 Existing, Installed in 2019



NOTE: The South Elevation will be just the white acrylic face with no Day/Night vinyl



**NOTE: SOUTH ELEVATION WILL BE WHITE DURING DAY AND NIGHT
NO DAY/NIGHT FILM**



SECTION DETAIL (N.T.S.)



Wayne County Community
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N/A

Job# 00000 **Sheet#** 7 of 18

Revision # 5 **Date:** 10-26-20

Revision Description:

Customer Approval:

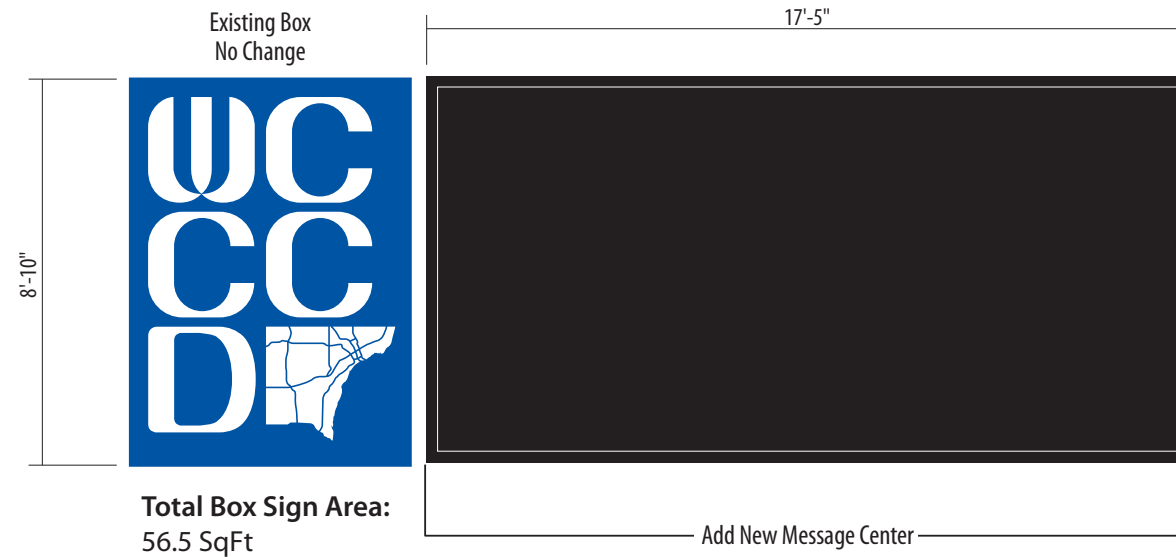
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B-4 Install in 2020



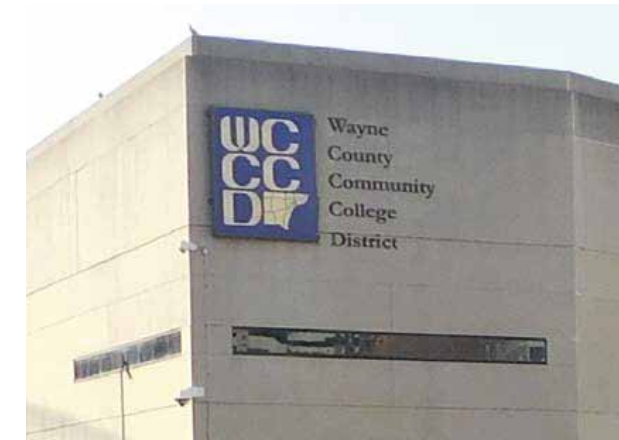
Total Box Sign Area:
56.5 SqFt

Darktronics GS6 Series EMC
15.85mm pixel pitch
Single sided
Full color w/ cellular modem

Viewing Area:
8'-4"H x 16'-11"W

Cabinet Size:
8'-10" H x 17'-5" W x 11" D

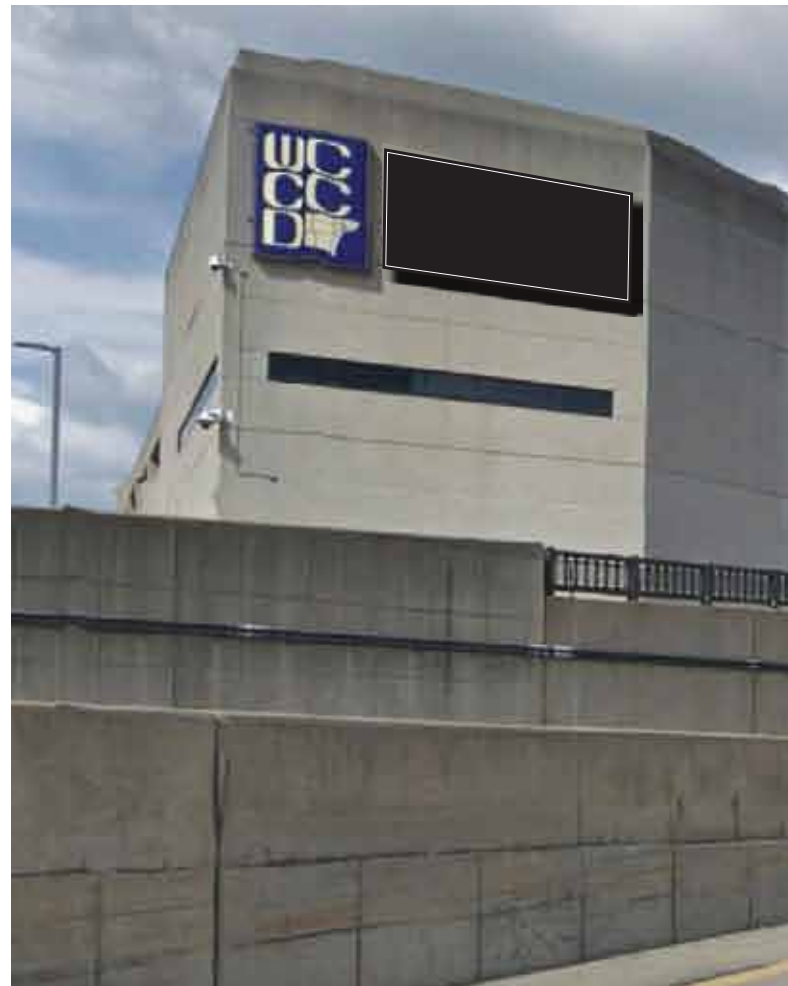
Total Square EMC Area:
153.8 SqFt



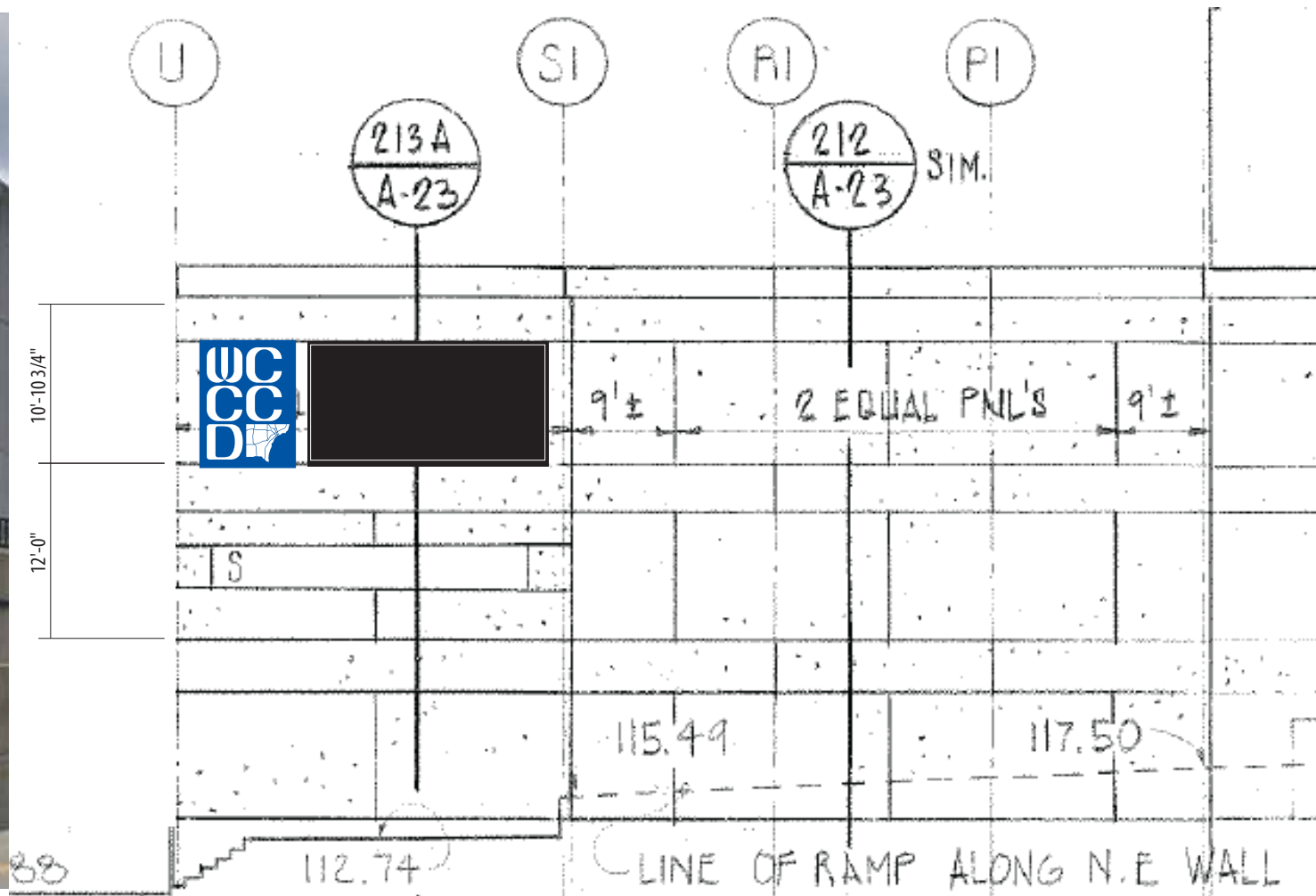
Existing Signage

1 ILLUMINATED FACE-LIT CHANNEL LETTERS
84 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

LAYOUT



Curtis L Ivery Downtown Campus - Southeast Elevation



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Scale:
N/A

Job# 00000 **Sheet#** 8 of 18

Revision # 5 **Date:** 10-26-20

Revision Description:

Customer Approval:

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ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO INSTALLATION

B-5 Future Sign



Internally Illuminated Channel Letters with
Face-Lit Dual Color Film
Day=Black / Night=White



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job#	Sheet#
00000	9 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

Revision Description:

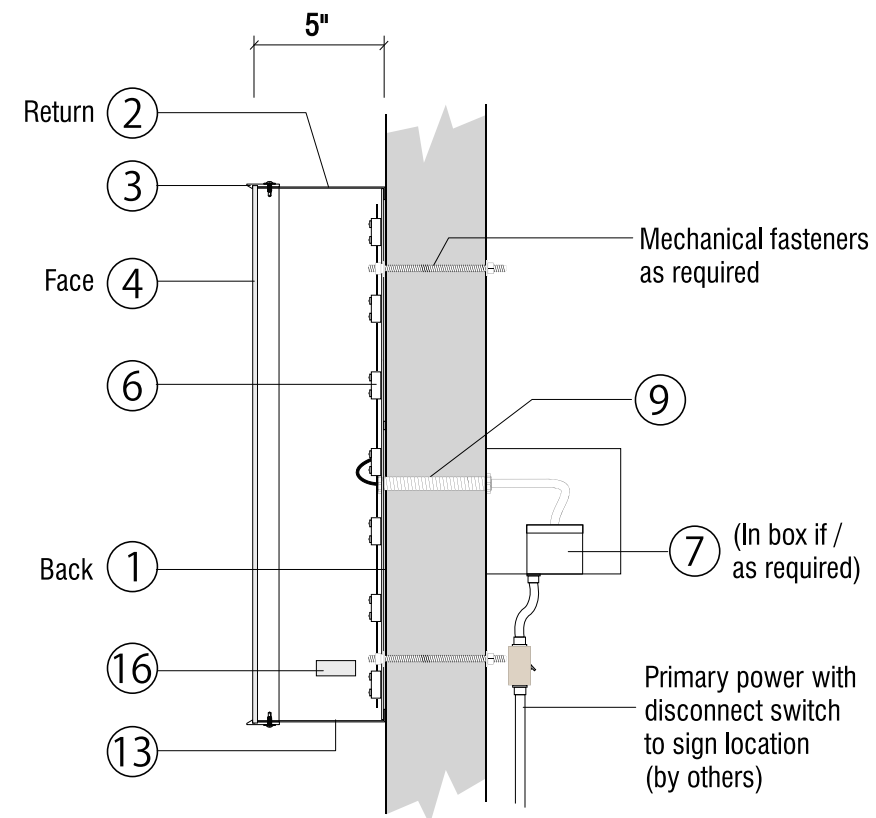
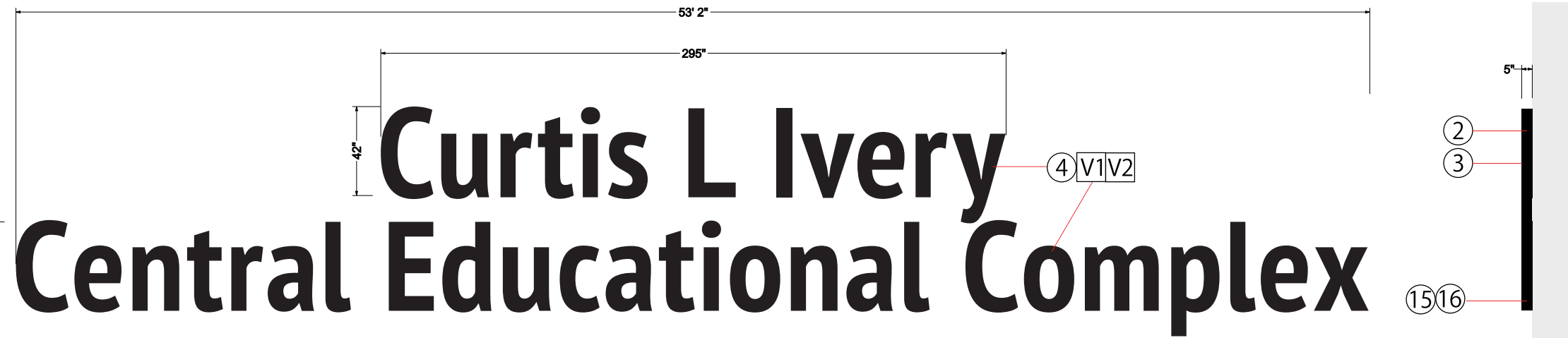
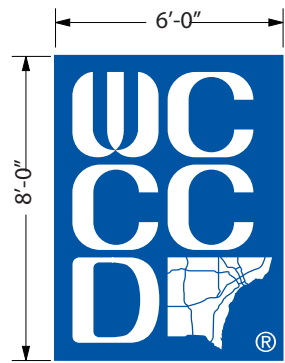
**Customer
Approval:**

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**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

B-6 Existing, Installed in 2019



SECTION DETAIL (N.T.S.)



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# **Sheet#**
00000 10 of 18

Revision # **Date:**
5 10-26-20

Revision Description:

Customer Approval:

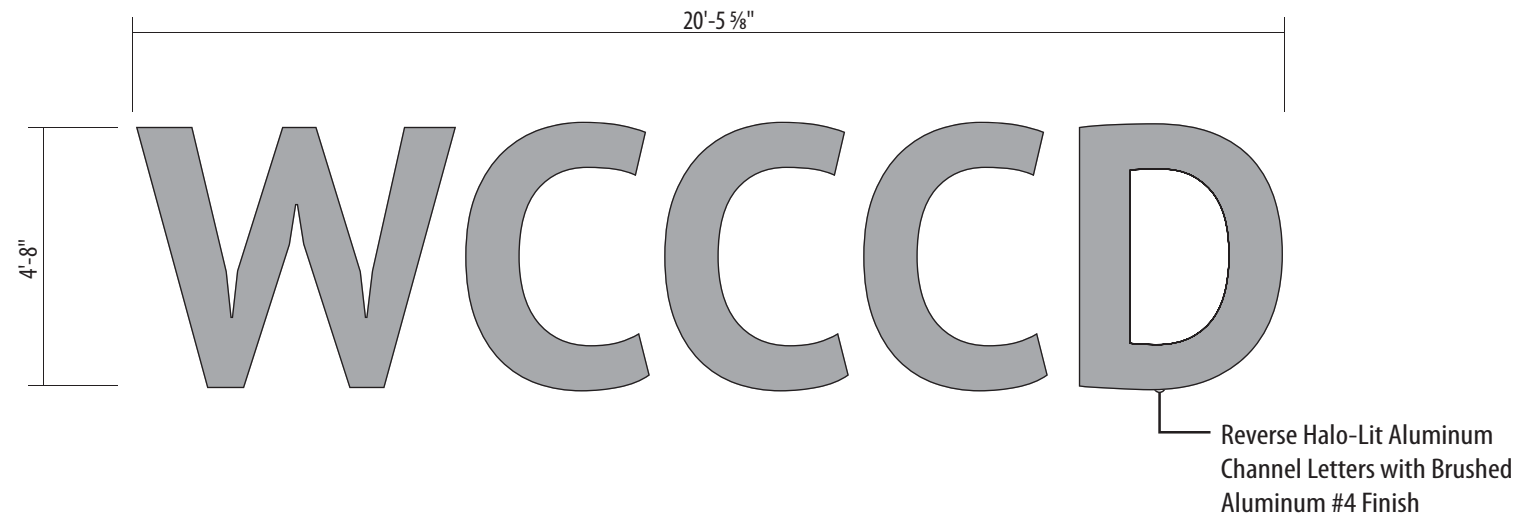
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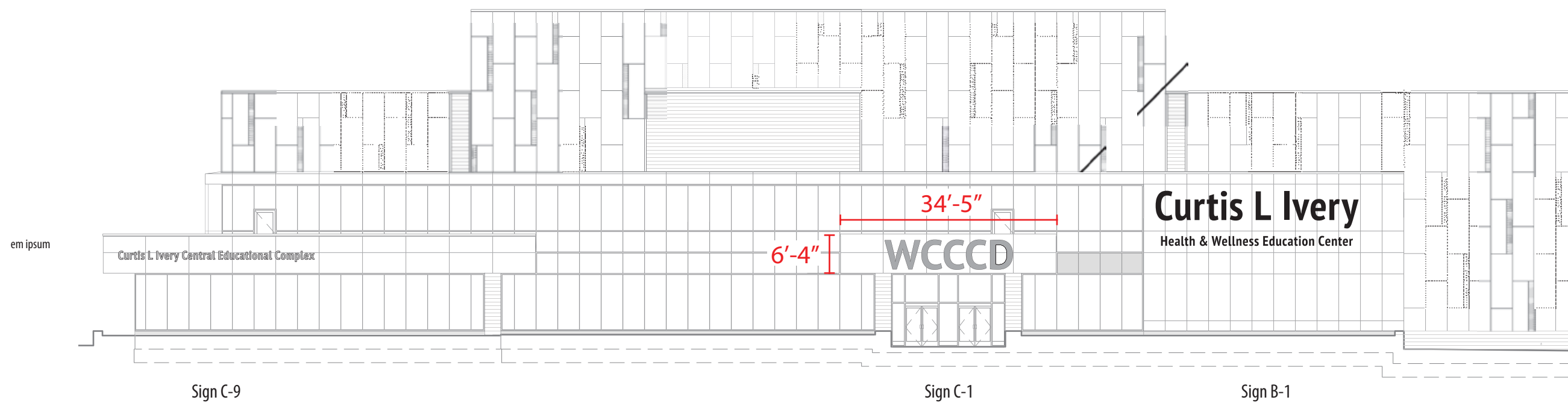
WCCCD | Curtis L. Ivery Central Educational Complex

C-1 Install in 2020



1
C1 ILLUMINATED REVERSE LIT HALO CHANNEL LETTERS
SCALE: 3/8" = 1'

LAYOUT



AECOM

27777 Franklin Road Suite 2100
Southfield, MI 48034, USA
T: 248-204-5900
aecom.com



FAIRMONT SIGN COMPANY

3750 East Outer Drive
Detroit, MI 48234
t: 313.368.4000 f: 313.368.9335
www.fairmontsign.com

Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job#	Sheet#
00000	11 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

Revision Description:

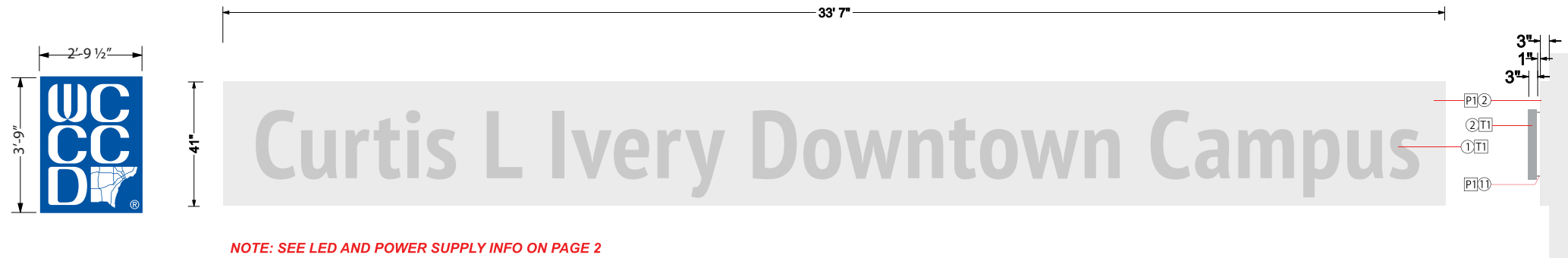
Customer
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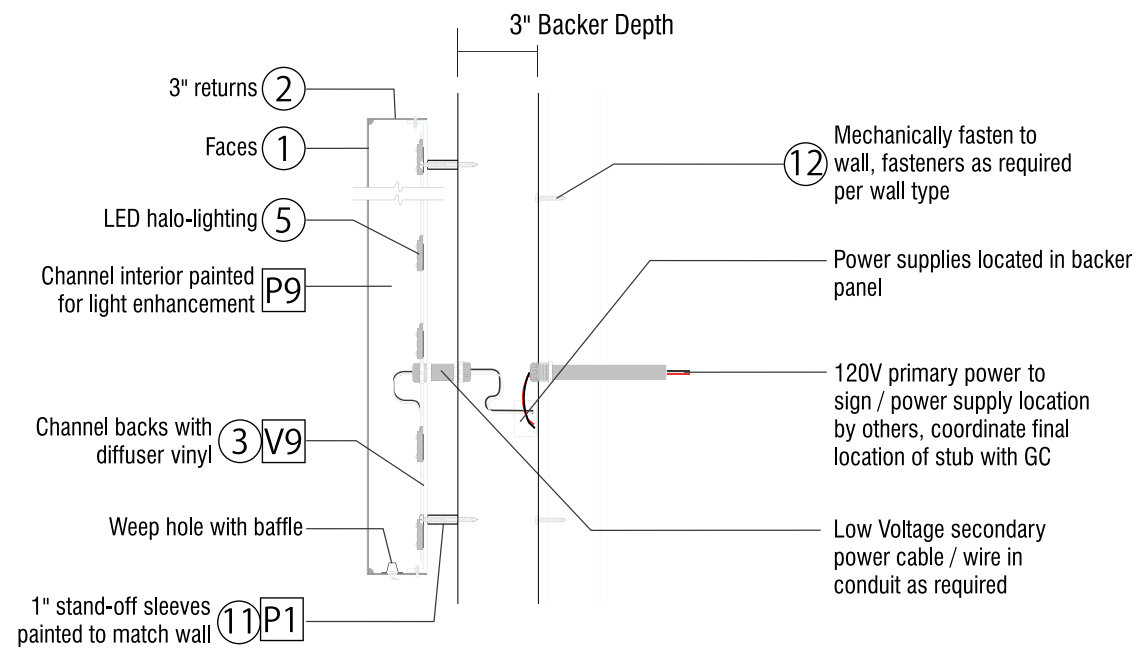
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**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

C-3 Existing, Installed in 2019



NOTE: SEE LED AND POWER SUPPLY INFO ON PAGE 2



HALO-LIT LETTER DETAIL

Scale: n.t.s



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# 00000 Sheet# 12 of 18

Revision # 5 Date: 10-26-20

Revision Description:

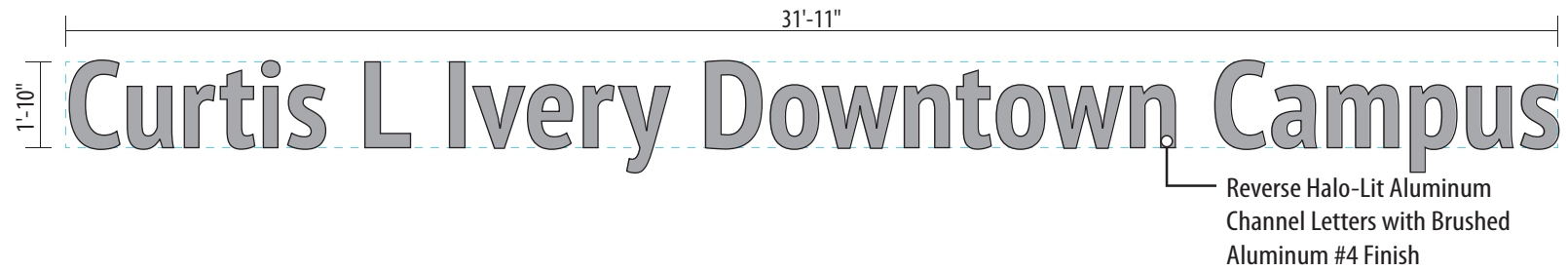
Customer
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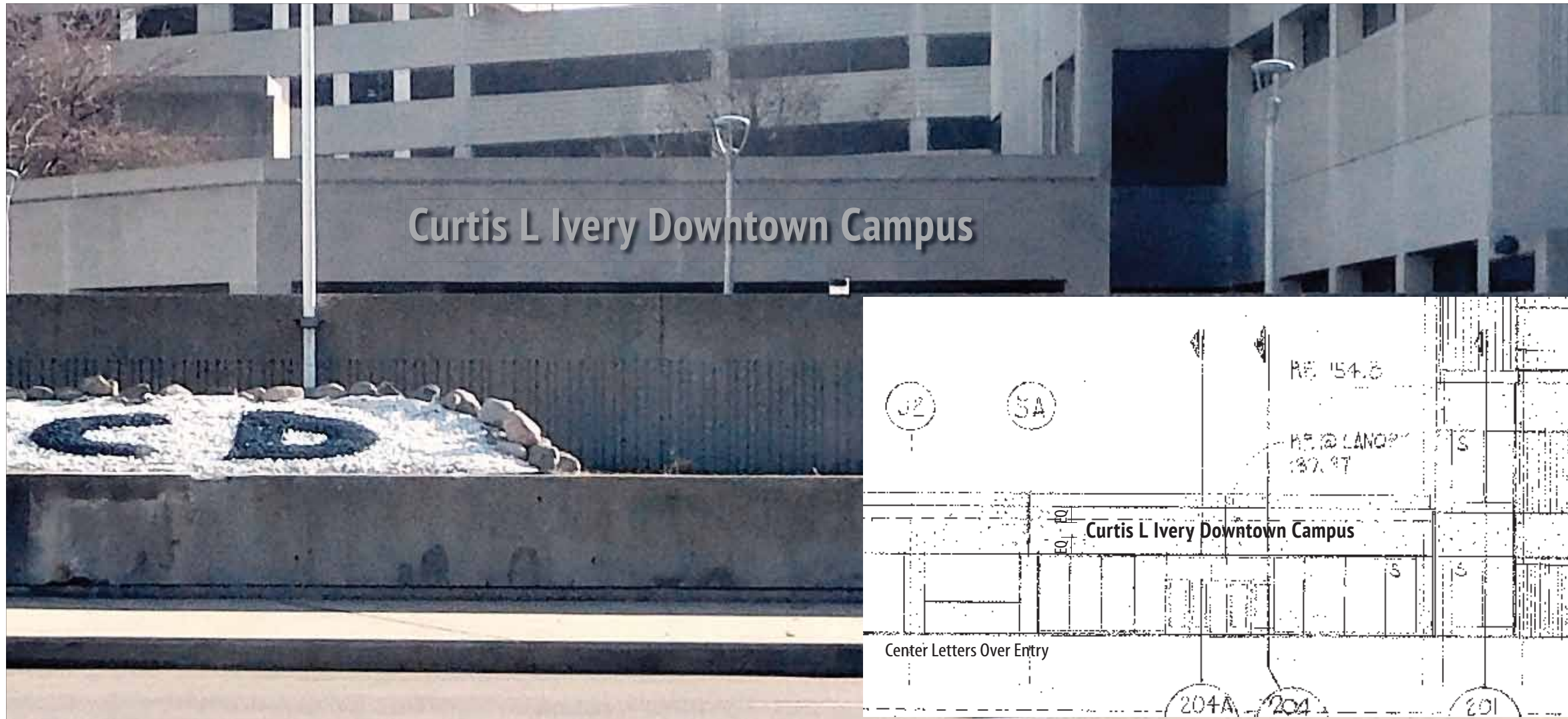
**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

C-4 Future Sign



1 ILLUMINATED REVERSE LIT HALO CHANNEL LETTERS
C4 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'

LAYOUT



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job#	Sheet#
00000	13 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

Revision Description:

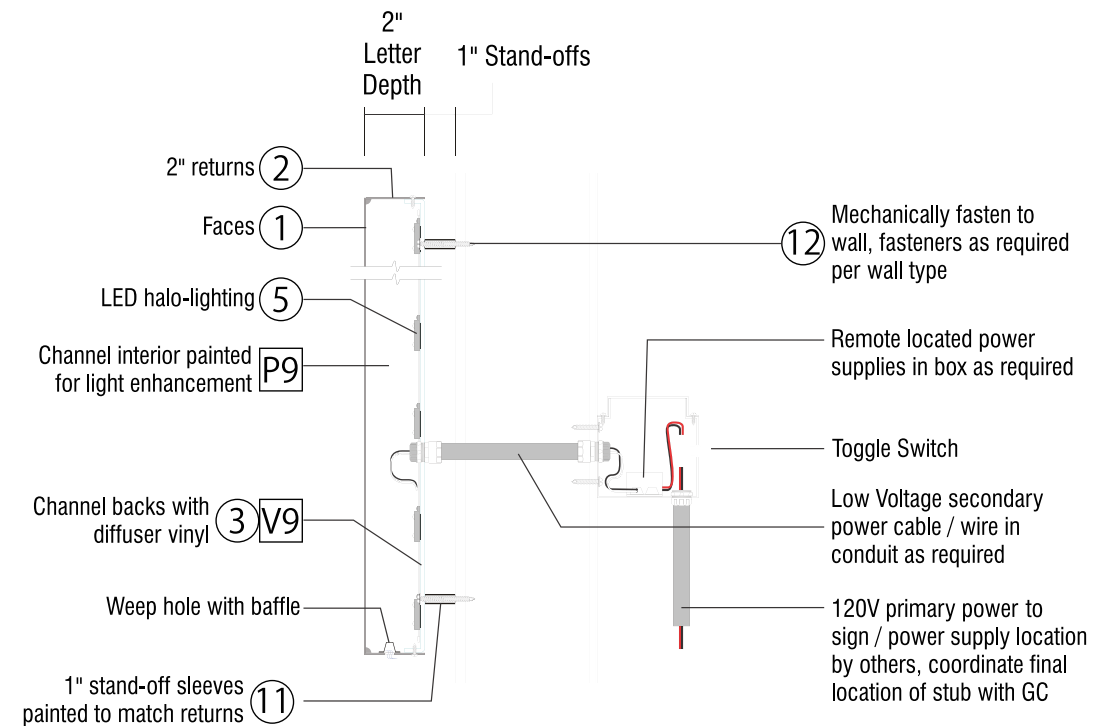
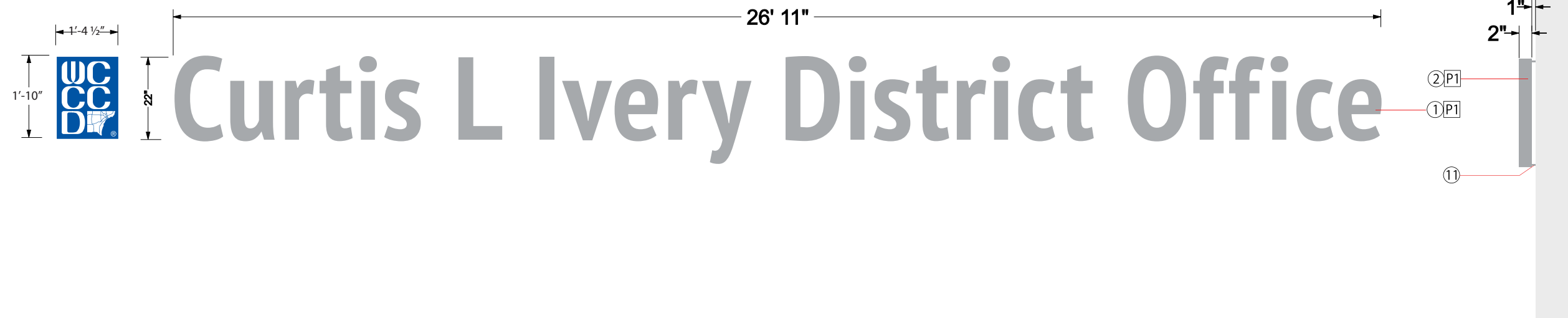
Customer
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FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

C-5 Existing, Installed in 2019



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# Sheet#
00000 14 of 18

Revision # Date:
5 10-26-20

Revision Description:

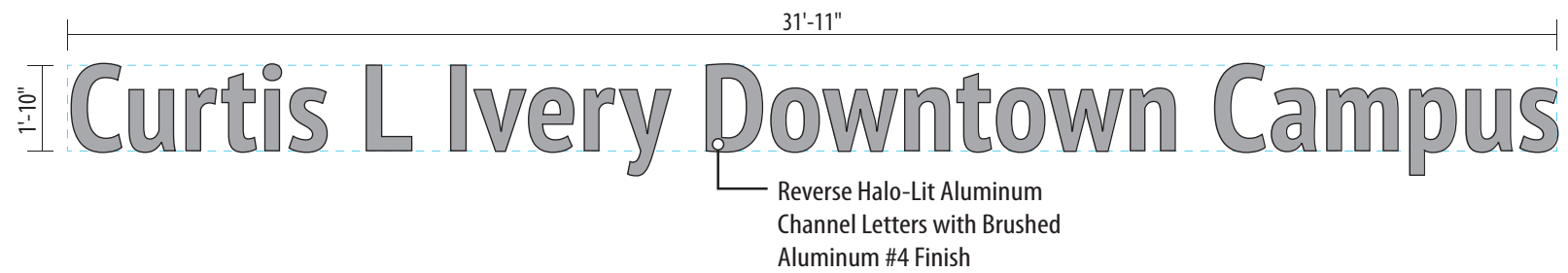
Customer
Approval:

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**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

C-6 Future Sign



1 ILLUMINATED REVERSE LIT HALO CHANNEL LETTERS
C6 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'

LAYOUT



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job#	Sheet#
00000	15 of 18

Revision #	Date:
5	10-26-20

Revision Description:

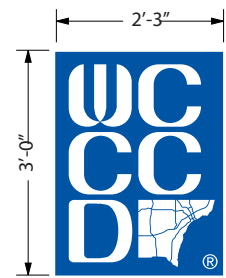
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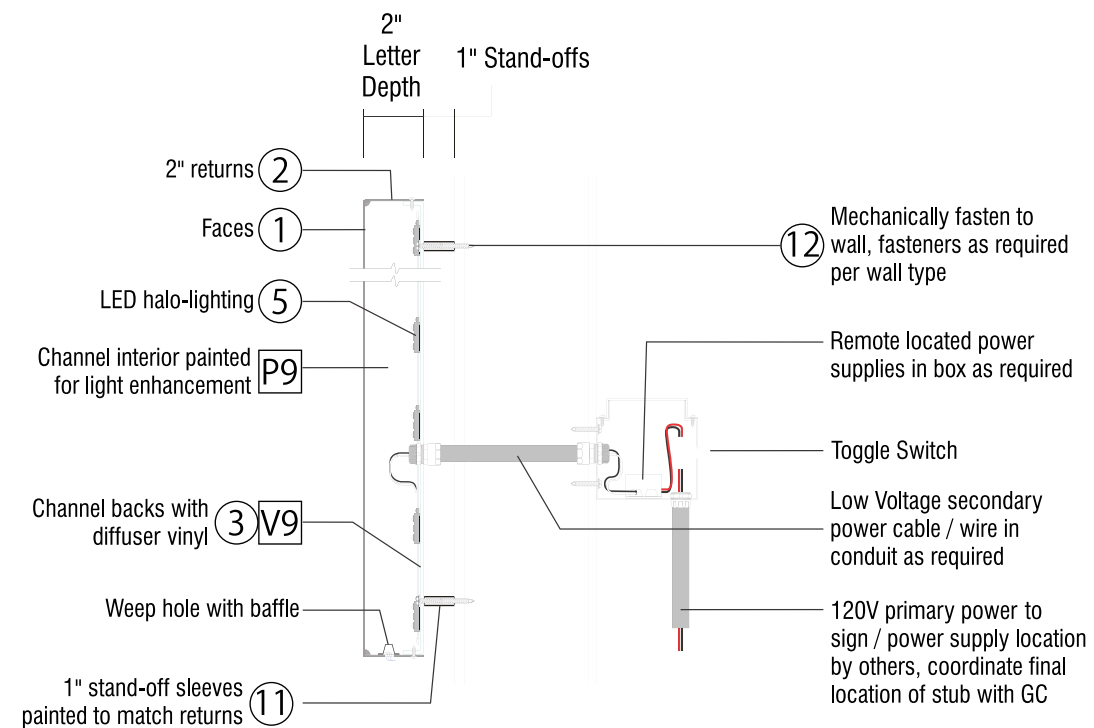
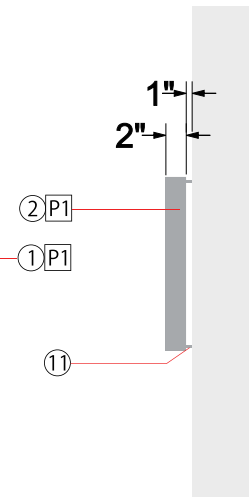
ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO INSTALLATION

C-7 Existing, Installed in 2019



Curtis L Ivery District Office

26' 11"



HALO-LIT LETTER DETAIL

Scale: n.t.s



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# 00000 Sheet# 16 of 18

Revision # 5 Date: 10-26-20

Revision Description:

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**ALL DIMENSIONS TO BE
FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

C-8 Existing, Installed in 2019



Reverse Halo-Lit Aluminum Channel Letters with Brushed Aluminum #4 Finish

1 ILLUMINATED REVERSE LIT HALO CHANNEL LETTERS
C8 SCALE: 1/4" = 1'

LAYOUT



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# **Sheet#**
00000 17 of 18

Revision # **Date:**
5 10-26-20

Revision Description:

**Customer
Approval:**

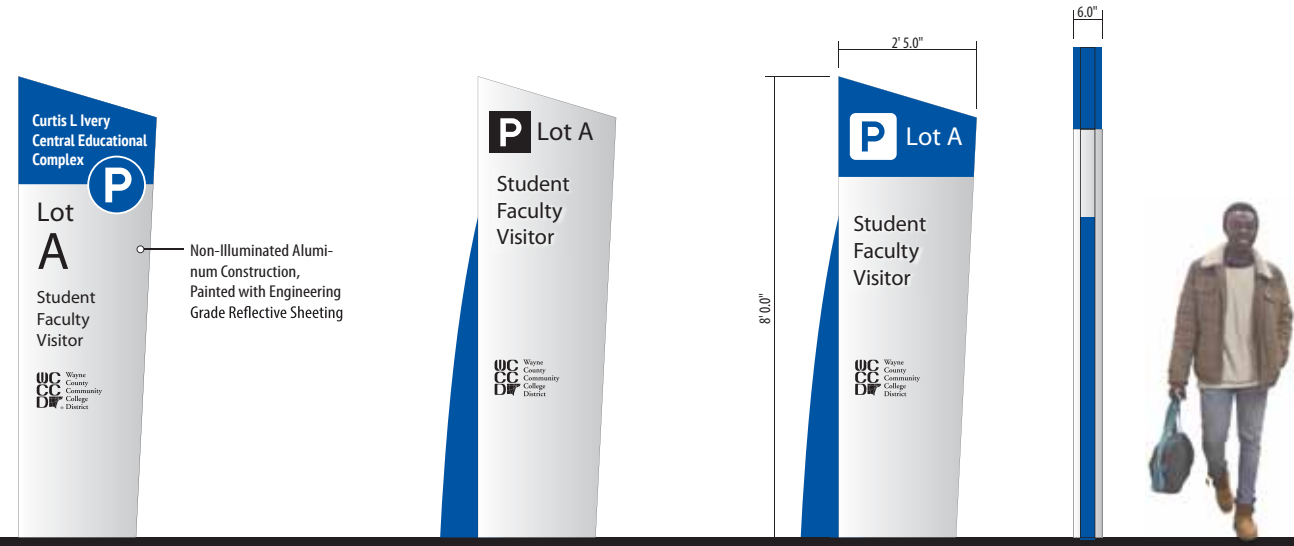
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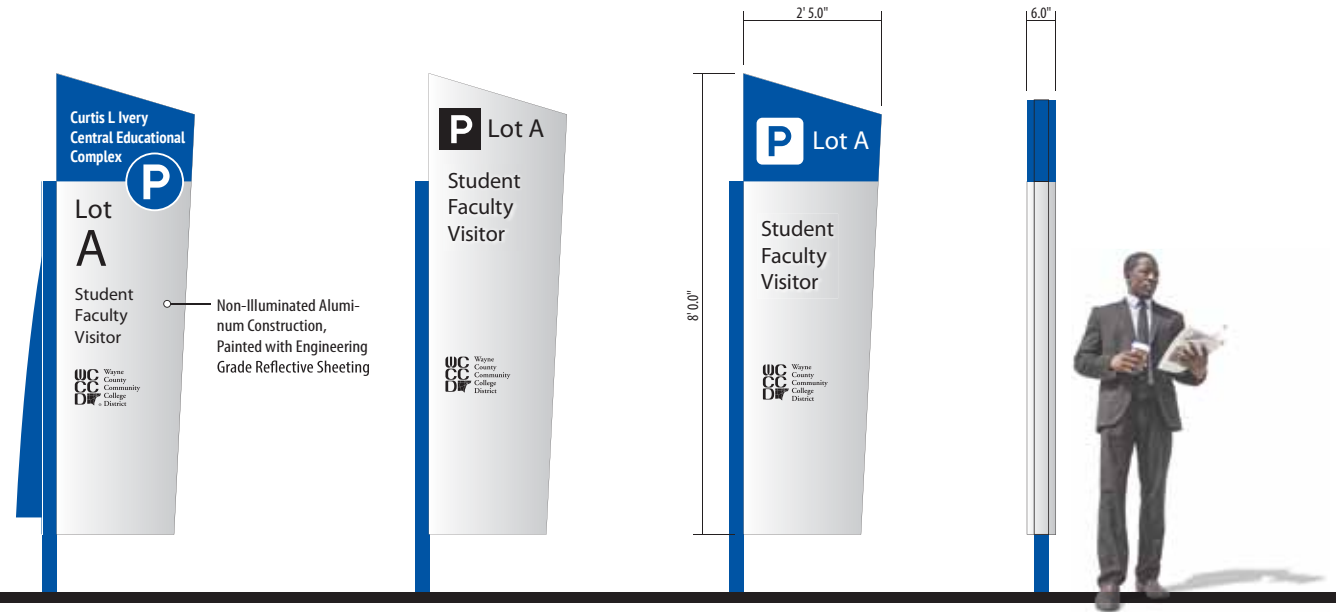
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FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**

D-1 Future Sign

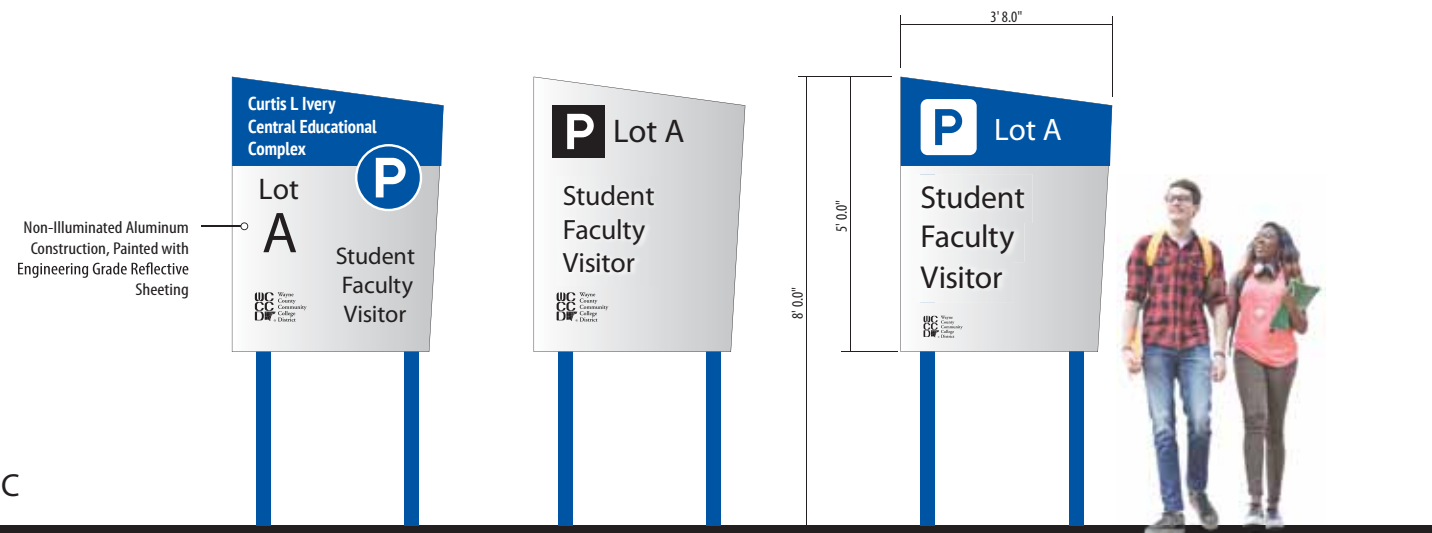
OPTION A



OPTION B



OPTION C



Wayne County Community
College District

Date:
07/16/20

File:
Accounts/Misc/WCCCD

Designer:
RNB

Scale:
N/A

Job# Sheet#
00000 18 of 18

Revision # Date:
5 10-26-20

Revision Description:

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FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO
INSTALLATION**