

# ROCKY RIVER BOARD OF ZONING & BUILDING APPEALS

## INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

**MEETINGS:** 2nd Thursday of each month at 7:00 P.M. in Council Chambers of Rocky River City Hall.

**DUE DATE FOR SUBMITTALS:** 2 weeks (14 days) prior to the scheduled BZA meeting. Late or incomplete submittals will not be forwarded to the Board for inclusion on the upcoming agenda.

**WHO MUST ATTEND:** A representative, including the property owner, must be present at the BZA meeting for all variance requests.

**APPLICATION FEE:** Residential Variance - \$100.00 first variance + \$35.00 each additional variance  
Commercial Variance - \$150.00 first variance + \$35.00 each additional variance request.

**SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS:** Please provide 11 stapled sets of the following:


- 1) **Appropriate Building Permit Application** for your project. (i.e., Building Permit Application, Fence Permit Application, Accessory Permit Application, etc.); **Check representing Application Fee.**
- 2) **Fully completed Variance Application.** Begin with a written narrative describing exactly what project you would like to do and why it is necessary to do so. Please refer to the Typical Variance Sheet for guidance on which standard (Practical Difficulty **OR** Unnecessary Hardship) applies to your request – only complete questions under the appropriate heading.
- 3) **Detailed site drawing** – see attached example, showing all existing structures on the subject property, as well as structures on properties directly adjacent to the location of the subject of your variance request (i.e., line of neighbor's house, driveway and garage closest to the addition you are proposing). Proposed structures must also be shown on the site drawing, with dimensions and distances from property lines clearly labeled. **PLEASE STAKE THE PROPERTY TO SHOW FOOTPRINT OF ADDITIONS, SHEDS OR LOCATIONS OF A/C CONDENSERS, etc.** Site plan should show lot coverage by building calculation (existing and proposed).
- 4) **Elevation drawings** (for pergola, garage, addition or any exterior alteration). Show what all sides of the finished project will look like. Submit a photo example of proposed fences and sheds. Show height of structure on the elevations. Additions will require existing and proposed interior floor plans for the floors that are affected.
- 5) **Photographs** of your property and adjacent properties. Label each photo for clarity.
- 6) **Support letters** from surrounding property owners, if available.
- 7) **Any other information as may be requested** by the Building Department or Board Members.

All documentation or other information shall be delivered to:

**Rocky River Board of Zoning & Building Appeals, City of Rocky River Building Department, 21012 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River, Ohio 44116. Call 440-331-0600 ext. 2037 with questions.**

*(Applicants may not communicate with or present information relating to their variance request to any Board member directly. Communications must be submitted to the Building Department for delivery to the Board.)*

**I, (the owner/applicant) understand that upon the granting of my variance request from the BZA, a separate Permit Application fee will be due prior to the issuance of the Building Permit. I will not begin construction until the Building Permit has been issued.**

 October 21, 2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner                                      Date

October 21, 2025  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant/Representative                                      Date

BZA Application Fee: \$150

Date Paid: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OF ROCKY RIVER  
21012 Hilliard Blvd., Rocky River, Ohio 44116  
Telephone (440) 331-0600 — Fax (440) 895-2628

APPLICATION FOR BOARD OF ZONING & BUILDING APPEALS  
(Please Print or Type)

Application Filing Date: May 29, 2025  
Zoning of Property \_\_\_\_\_

Hearing Date: November 13, 2025  
Permanent Parcel No. \_\_\_\_\_

NOTICE OF REQUEST OF A HEARING BEFORE THE  
BOARD OF ZONING & BUILDING APPEALS

Address of property seeking variance: 1285 Orchard Park Drive

Ruffing Montessori School/Anne Lashutka  
Name of Property Owner

The Krueger Group/Jack Doheny  
Name of Applicant / Representative

1285 Orchard Park Dr

12600 Triskett Road Cleveland 44111

Address

Address

440-333-2250

440-465-1893

(216) 252-0222

440-503-9486

Telephone No.

Cell Phone No.

Telephone No.

Cell Phone No.

E-MAIL: alashutka@ruffingmontessori.org

E-MAIL: JDoheny@buildwithkrueger.com

Description of what is intended to be done:

We would like to install a message board on the side of our school building rather than installing it as a free-standing structure.

Sections of the Code from which variance is being requested:

1193.11 message boards must be free-standing.

List variances requested:

We would like to install a message board on the side of our building rather than free-standing.

Property Owner's Signature

Applicant/Representative's Signature

★ Please note that the Board members visit the subject property prior to each BZA meeting. Please indicate whether or not you have a dog(s) that may be outside at the time of their visits.

Yes ☐

No ☒

# TYPICAL VARIANCE SHEET

Please check appropriate box and answer questions as directed.

	Check as Applicable	VARIANCE STANDARD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any functional, land or building <b>USE</b> not specifically permitted in either a particular zoning district, or otherwise not permitted by the Development Code</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Use) Unnecessary Hardship
<b>ADDITIONS &amp; BUILDINGS:</b> <i>(Complete Building Permit Application)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rear, side &amp; front setbacks</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coverage (&gt;28%)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>DRIVEWAYS:</b> <i>(Complete Building Permit Application)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Width</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Distance from property line</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circular if lot width is &lt;90'</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>SIGNS:</b> <i>(Complete Sign Permit Application)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Area allowed (maximum sq. ft.)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front setback</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lot width &lt;100'</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of items of information</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On side of building</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>FENCES:</b> <i>(Complete Fence Permit Application)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height or Openness</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Front Yard (in setback)</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>ACCESSORY BUILDINGS (Play Structures, Storage Sheds:</b> <i>(Complete Accessory Structure Permit Application); Detached Garages:</i> <i>(Complete Building Permit Application)</i>		
<i>Note: Total square footage of all accessory buildings, including detached garages, is not to exceed 600 square feet.)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Height</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setback from property line</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Square footage</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>Air Conditioners and Generators:</b> <i>(Complete HVAC Permit for A/C or Electrical Permit for Generators)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In side or rear yard &lt;10' from property line or in front yard</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<b>Parking:</b> <i>(Complete Building Permit Application)</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&lt; the number of spaces required</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setback from property line</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(Area) Practical Difficulties

## PRACTICAL DIFFICULTIES

### ALL QUESTIONS REQUIRE A COMPLETE RESPONSE

**R.R.C.O. 1133.17(c)(1).** In order to grant an area variance, the following factors shall be considered and weighted by the Board of Appeals to determine practical difficulty:

- A.) Describe what special conditions and circumstances exist which are peculiar to the land or structure involved and which are not applicable generally to other land or structures in the same zoning district (i.e., exceptional irregularity, narrowness, shallowness or steepness of the lot; or proximity to non-conforming and inharmonious uses, structures or conditions).

See attached.

- B.) Explain whether the property in question will yield a reasonable return or whether there can be any beneficial use of the property without the variance (discuss use limitations without the variance).

See attached.

- C.) Explain whether the variance is substantial and is the minimum necessary to make possible the reasonable use of the land or structures (demonstrate how much the variance request deviates from Code requirements, i.e., coverage is 1 or 2% above Code, or setback is 1 or 2 feet less than Code requirement).

See attached.

- D.) Explain whether the essential character of the neighborhood would be substantially altered and whether adjoining properties would suffer substantial detriment as a result of the variance (discuss the increase of value, use, and aesthetic appeal for both your property and adjoining properties, together with any negative impact to adjoining properties).

See attached.

E.) Explain whether the variance would adversely affect the delivery of governmental services, such as water, sewer, or trash pickup.

The variance would not adversely affect the delivery of governmental services in any way.

F.) Explain whether the property owner purchased the property with knowledge of the zoning restrictions.

Ruffing Montessori School purchased the building nearly 50 years ago. The zoning restrictions did not exist when the property was purchased.

G.) Explain whether special conditions or circumstances exist as a result of actions of the owner.

No special conditions or circumstances exist as a result of actions of the owners.

H.) Explain whether the property owner's predicament feasibly can be obviated through some method other than a variance (why other means and methods of property improvements or enhancements would not suffice).

Given the safety concerns with installing a free-standing message board, installing the sign on the building itself is more feasible.

I.) Explain whether the spirit and intent behind the zoning requirement would be observed and substantial justice done by granting a variance (discuss the positive impact of your improvement on your property and on the surrounding neighborhood).

See attached.

J.) Explain whether the granting of the variance requested will confer on the applicant any special privilege that is denied by this regulation to other lands, structures, or buildings in the same district.

The issue at hand would not apply to residential buildings. Because there are no other business establishments in the area, no special privileges are denied by this regulation to other buildings in the same district.

K.) Explain whether a literal interpretation of the provisions of this Code would deprive the applicant of rights commonly enjoyed by other properties in the same district under the terms of this Code.

We are the only non-residential establishment in the district so this does not apply.

**PLEASE NOTE: A separate Permit Application and fee will be due prior to issuance of the Building Permit. NO CONSTRUCTION IS TO BEGIN until the Building Permit has been issued.**

UNNECESSARY HARDSHIP STANDARD

ONLY ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS IF YOU ARE REQUESTING A VARIANCE FOR ANY FUNCTIONAL, LAND OR BUILDING USE NOT SPECIFICALLY PERMITTED IN EITHER A PARTICULAR ZONING DISTRICT, OR OTHERWISE NOT PERMITTED BY THE DEVELOPMENT CODE. (See Typical Variance Sheet for guidance.)

**ALL QUESTIONS REQUIRE A COMPLETE RESPONSE**

In order to grant a use variance, the Board of Appeals shall determine that strict compliance with the terms of this Code will result in unnecessary hardship to the applicant. **THE APPLICANT MUST DEMONSTRATE SUCH HARDSHIP BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE** that the criteria in Rocky River Codified Ordinances, sub-section 1133.17(c)(2) is satisfied.

**R.R.C.O. Chapter 1133.17(c)(2)A.** Please demonstrate hardship with the following:

- i.) Explain how the variance requested stems from a condition that is **UNIQUE TO THE PROPERTY AT ISSUE** and not ordinarily found in the same zone or district. (i.e., topographical or geological limitations; unique structure of original building, etc.)

See attached.

- ii.) Explain how the granting of the variance will not have any material adverse effect on the rights of adjacent property owners or residents.

See attached.

- iii.) Explain how the granting of the variance will not have any material adverse effect on the public health, safety or general welfare of the City of Rocky River.

See attached.

iv.) Explain how the variance will be consistent with the general spirit and intent of the Code.

See attached.

v.) Explain how the variance sought is the minimum that will afford relief to the applicant.

See attached.

**R.R.C.O. Chapter 1133.17(c)(2)B.** If applicable, explain what further evidence you would like the Board of Appeals to consider, as follows:

i.) Whether the property cannot be put to any economically viable use under any of the permitted uses in the zoning district in which the property is located.

See attached.

ii.) Whether, and to the extent to which (if applicable), the hardship condition is not created by actions of the applicant.

See attached.

**PLEASE NOTE: A separate Permit Application and fee will be due prior to issuance of the Building Permit. NO CONSTRUCTION IS TO BEGIN until the Building Permit has been issued.**



# APPLICATION FOR BOARD OF ZONING & BUILDING APPEALS

## Ruffing Montessori School

1285 Orchard Park Drive, Rocky River

### Practical Difficulties

A). The fact that Ruffing Montessori is an elementary school creates a unique circumstance. Located on Orchard Park Drive, Ruffing Montessori has served nearly 280 children, ages 3 through 8th grade, at this site for almost 50 years.

Because of the nature of our student population, we believe that a freestanding message board would pose an attractive nuisance and create unnecessary safety risks. The proposed location is within an active play area used daily for recess and physical education, making it nearly impossible to ensure that students, and even neighborhood children, would not climb or play on the structure.

At a previous meeting, it was suggested that we simply instruct students to stay off the sign. While we understand that intention, in a school environment it is not practical to rely solely on verbal reminders to prevent this type of behavior. Attaching the sign securely to the building would eliminate the climbing hazard and maintain the safety of our campus.

B). At the previous meeting, we were informed that under the current Rocky River Building Code, Ruffing could install a freestanding sign at the end of our driveway without seeking a variance, displaying it during school hours. However, in an effort to be considerate of our neighbors and preserve the residential character of the area, we have chosen a more thoughtful approach. We are proposing to install the message board within a recessed nook beside our front entrance—an option that significantly minimizes visibility and overall impact. This location is also the safest and most practical choice, keeping the structure out of the active play area and away from traffic sightlines while still allowing it to serve its intended purpose.

C). Ruffing's request to install a message board on the side of the building represents an insubstantial and minor variance from the existing requirements. In response to feedback from our neighbors, we carefully reconsidered the sign's placement and relocated it to an alcove directly adjacent to our main entrance. This adjustment ensures the sign remains functional and visible to families entering the school, while also reducing its visibility from the street and minimizing any potential disruption to nearby residents.

A freestanding sign in the originally proposed location would, in fact, be more noticeable to passing drivers and the surrounding homes. By attaching the message board to the building instead, existing trees and landscaping will provide natural screening, further softening its appearance and ensuring the installation blends seamlessly into the character of the neighborhood.



D). Currently, many people driving past our entrance are unaware that a school is even located there. While a freestanding sign might make the property more visible, it would do so in a way that changes the quiet, residential character of the neighborhood. As noted in Section C, granting this variance would actually help *preserve* that essential character.

I). Over the course of nearly 50 years in the Orchard Park community, Ruffing has consistently worked to be a respectful and considerate neighbor. We welcome neighbors to stroll through our property when school is not in session and allow Rocky River school buses to use our parking lot as a cut-through to ease traffic. In addition, we have regularly reviewed and adjusted our pick-up and drop-off procedures to minimize disruption and have planted or trimmed trees and shrubs at the request of nearby residents. Our longstanding commitment to the neighborhood is precisely why we are requesting to place the sign on the side of our building—rather than in a more visible location—so it remains discreet and in keeping with the character of the area.

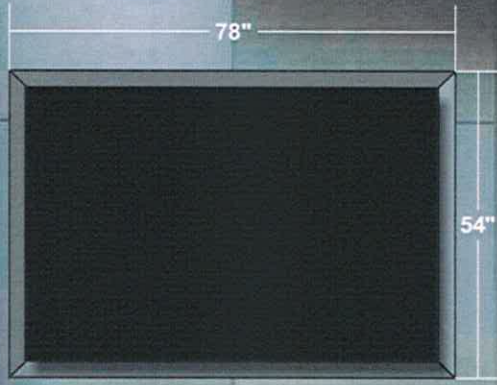


×

Measure distance  
Click on the map to add to your path

Total distance: 140.05 ft (42.69 m)







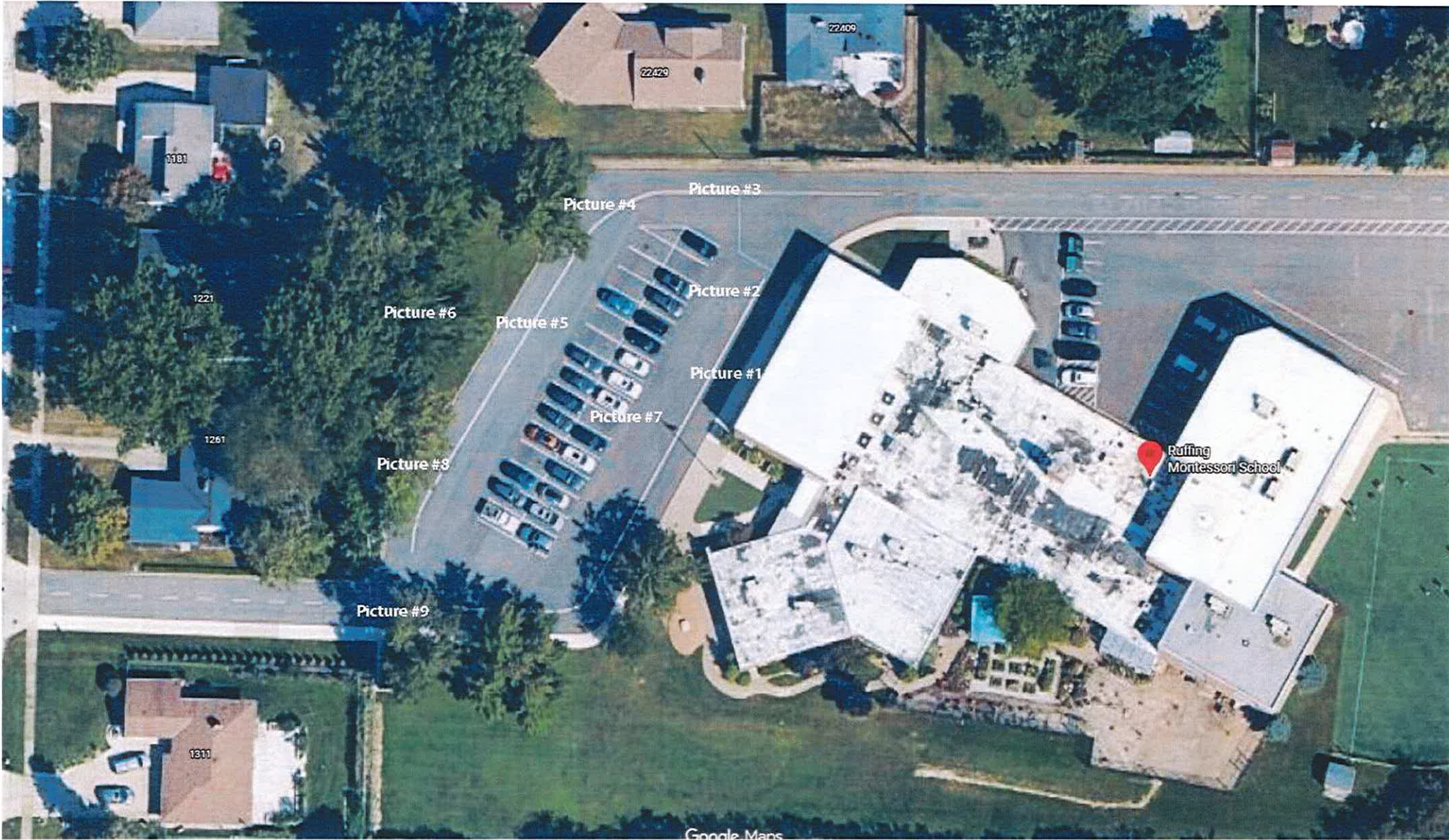






Photo #1



Photo #2





Photo #3





Photo #4





Photo #5





Photo #6





Photo #7





Photo #8





Photo #9





Sign is set back  
40" from edge of  
existing masonry  
wall.

