

Statement in Support of Tree House Brewing Company, Inc.
Application to Charlton Zoning Board of Appeals for Variance for Sign at
129 Sturbridge Road, Charlton, Massachusetts

I. Background.

Landreau Realty LLC owns the parcels known as and located at 129 Sturbridge Road (the “Property”)¹ Tree House Brewing Company, Inc. leases the Property from Landreau Realty, LLC for purposes of the operation of a licensed brewery and distillery and other uses related thereto.

Landreau Realty LLC and Tree House Brewing Company, Inc. (collectively, the “Petitioner”) have petitioned the Charlton Zoning Board of Appeals (the “Board”) for a variance from the maximum size restrictions for ground signs provided in Section 200-5.6(G) of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw (the “Bylaw”) in connection with the construction of a sign at the Property (the “Project”).

II. Requirement for Variance.

Section 200-5.6 of the Bylaw provides the design and dimensional requirements for signs. Section 200-5.6(B) defines a “ground sign” as “[a]ny sign having as supports, wood or metal columns, pipes, angle iron framing, masonry, plastic or any combination of these materials, unattached to any building or other structure. This includes single-pole pylon-type sign”.

The proposed ground mounted sign will consist of a wooden sign panel with the dimensions of approximately 18’-9” x 7’ or an area of 131.25 SF, providing the Tree House Brewing Company, Inc. logo followed by lettering of varying heights from 22.375 inches to 7.625 inches on both sides, and will be attached to two 16” wooden posts, all installed on a stone base with the address carved in granite (collectively, the “Sign”). The Sign will have a total height of approximately 11’ and will be located approximately 24.67’ from the driveway intersecting Route 20 and the Property. The letters and logo on the Sign will be halo lit. Based on the construction of the Sign and the definition of a “ground sign” provided in Section 200-5.6(B) of the Bylaw, the Sign would be considered a “ground sign” under the Bylaw.²

Section 200-5.6(G) provides that ground signs shall have a maximum sign restriction of 32 SF. As provided above, the Sign will have an area of approximately 131.25 SF and, therefore, the Petitioner shall require 99.25 SF of relief.

¹ The Property is identified as Parcels 32-B-3 and 4

² Section 200-5.6(B) of the Bylaw also provides that a “standing sign” is defined as “[a]ny sign maintained on structures or supports that are placed on, or anchored in, the ground and that is independent of any building or other structure”. Based on this definition, the Sign may also be considered a “standing sign” under the Bylaw.

Section 200-5.6(J)(5) of the Bylaw provides that the Board shall have the authority to issue a variance from the provision of Section 200-5.6 of the Bylaw in accordance with Section 200-7.3(B)(1) of the Bylaw. Section 200-7.3(B)(1) provides that the Board shall hear and decide petitions for variances in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A in all districts subject to appropriate conditions which are specified therein.

III. Reasons for Approval of Variance.

The Project satisfies the variance criteria as set forth in M.G.L. c. 40A, §10 for the reasons stated herein:

1. Describe how the hardship is owing to circumstances relating to the soil conditions, shape, and/or topography of the land or structures and how the hardship especially affects said land or structures, but does not affect generally the zoning district in which it is located.

There exist circumstances relating the shape and topography that especially affect the Property and the structures thereon, but do not affect generally properties in the zoning district. The Property's frontage is along Route 20, which is regulated by MassDOT and large portions of the frontage are occupied by guardrails, which limit the potential locations for visible signage. The most easterly portion of the frontage has varying elevations and is in close proximity to jurisdictional areas which further limit the potential locations for the construction of signage. Unlike other neighboring properties which are relatively flat and have structures built adjacent to Route 20, Tree House Brewing Company, Inc's building is located a significant distance from Route 20 due to extensive grade changes throughout the Property. The proposed location of the Sign is the most level portion of the Property and in close proximity to the driveway to access the Property. The proposed area of the Sign will overcome the unique topographic and shape issues affecting the Property and will allow motorists traveling at prevailing speeds and navigating the horizontal and vertical curves of Route 20 to view the Sign and take appropriate actions to safely slow and transition into the driveway serving the Property.

2. Describe how a literal enforcement of the provision of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw would involve a substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the petitioner or appellant.

The Petitioner would suffer substantial hardship if literal enforcement of the maximum size restrictions in Section 200-5.6(G) was required. Tree House Brewing Company, Inc. welcomes hundreds of guests each day. If the Petitioner is required to comply with the maximum size restrictions related to area, the sign will not be constructed at a size which will ensure proper visibility for guests visiting the facility. These guests will either have to find an intersection to

turnaround or could potentially forgo a visit to the facility. Any issues with identifying the location of the driveway would cause traffic issues for not only Tree House Brewing Company, Inc.'s guests, but other motorists on Route 20. These traffic issues may also decrease the likelihood that guests would return to Tree House Brewing Company, Inc., which collectively could result in a significant loss of revenue.

3. Describe how desirable relief may be granted without detriment to the public good and without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of the Charlton Zoning Bylaw.

The requested variance may be granted without detriment to the public good and without nullifying or substantially derogating from the intent or purpose of the Bylaw. The Sign will protect the public health, safety, convenience, and general welfare of the residents of the Town of Charlton in accordance with Section 200-5.6(A) of the Bylaw. The Sign is appropriately designed and located to allow for proper visibility and legibility in the context of the Route 20 corridor and the Property and will not obstruct traffic visibility or cause traffic hazard, but will in fact improve traffic safety. Please see the attached letter prepared by Vanasse & Associates, Inc. dated May 6, 2021. The Sign will complement the natural aesthetics of the Property and protect the character and appearance of the surrounding area in Charlton.

Ref: 8978

May 6, 2021

Mr. Frank Lombardi, Chair
Zoning Board of Appeals
Town of Charlton
37 Main Street
Charlton, MA 01507

Re: Tree House Brewing Company Monument Sign
129 Sturbridge Road (Route 20)
Charlton, Massachusetts

Dear Chair Lombardi and Members of the Zoning Board of Appeals:

Vanasse & Associates, Inc. (VAI) has completed a review of the design and location of the proposed monument sign for Tree House Brewing Company located at 129 Sturbridge Road (Route 20) in Charlton, Massachusetts (hereafter referred to as the "Project"). Specifically, our review focused on the design and placement of the sign along Route 20 as these features relate to the recommended design standards for legibility and safety in the context of the location of the Tree House Brewing Company driveway along the Route 20 corridor.

Based on our review, we have concluded that the proposed sign is appropriately designed and located to allow for proper visibility and legibility in the context of the Route 20 corridor and this specific location. The sign dimensions and letter height are appropriate and necessary to allow for a motorist traveling at the prevailing speed along this section of Route 20 (up to 60 miles per hour (mph)) and navigating the horizontal and vertical curves approaching the driveway to view the sign and take the appropriate actions to safely slow and transition into the Tree House Brewing driveway.

The following summarizes our review of the design and location of the proposed monument sign for Tree House Brewing Company.

Project Context and Existing Conditions

The Project site is located along the south side of Route 20 between Sampson Road and Capen Road. Route 20 is a four-lane (two travel lanes per direction) urban principal arterial roadway that is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and accommodates approximately 14,000 vehicles per day on an average weekday in the vicinity of the Project site. The posted speed limit is 50 mph, with prevailing travel speeds generally found to be between 55 and 60 mph.¹ The roadway alignment along Route 20 from west to east consists of a horizontal curve through the intersection with Sampson Road after which there is a crest vertical curve approaching the Tree House Brewing Company driveway that transitions to a sag vertical curve at the driveway. Route 20 has been reconstructed at the Tree House Brewing Company driveway that included widening the roadway cross-section to add a

¹The prevailing travel speed is also known as the 85th percentile vehicle travel speed, or the speed at which 85 percent of observed vehicles travel at or below during the observation period.

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westbound left-turn lane on Route 20. These improvements were purposely designed to address concerns expressed by both the Town and MassDOT related to sight lines at the Tree House Brewing Company driveway and the increased traffic resulting from the success of the brewery.

The Tree House Brewing Company driveway provides two exiting travel lanes and a single entering lane. The brewery itself is located approximately 1,500 feet south of Route 20 and has been purposely located to create an arrival experience for patrons of a rustic building situated within a wooded compose. Traffic patterns measured at the Tree House Brewing Company driveway indicate that approximately 56 percent of patrons are oriented to/from the west on Route 20, with the remaining 44 percent oriented to/from the east.

Proposed Sign Program

The proposed monument sign will be situated along the south side of Route 20, east of the Tree House Brewing Company driveway and located approximately 27 feet south of the southern edge of the traveled-way along Route 20. The sign location complies with MassDOT sign set-back requirements (12 feet from the State Highway Layout) and is also ideally located at the approximate crest of the vertical curve along Route 20 to maximize sight lines for motorists approaching the driveway. Further, with the majority of traffic destined to the brewery arriving from the west, placing the sign to the east of the driveway increases sight lines to the sign and the reaction distance for an eastbound motorist prior to reaching the driveway.

The sign panel will be 84 inches in height and 225 inches long (approximately 130 square feet), and includes the Tree House Brewing Company logo followed by lettering of varying heights from 22.375 inches to 7.625 inches on both sides (i.e., visible from both directions along Route 20). The sign size and lettering have been developed to assist motorists in locating the Tree House Brewing Company driveway as they navigate this section of the Route 20 corridor, a high speed roadway with both horizontal and vertical curves. Providing proper guidance to motorists arriving to the area as to the location of the driveway is important to afford sufficient time for motorists to maneuver within traffic, particularly at the higher travel approach speeds.

The proposed text height and spacing are consistent with the sign recommendations of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)² for guide signs, which specifies that a minimum letter height of 12-inches be used for overhead mounted signs, which are used on high speed roadways. The use of larger lettering for “Tree House” on the sign panel is consistent with the distance from which the sign needs to be visible to an approaching motorist given the position of the sign at the crest of a vertical curve with motorists viewing the sign from a low point along the roadway. The small lettering for “Brewing Company” is also consistent with the minimum letter height specified in the MUTCD for post mounted signs, which recommends a minimum letter height of 6 inches. The sign dimensions thereafter follow from the letter heights and spacing which are proportionate in order to allow for legibility.

²Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD); Federal Highway Administration; Washington, D.C.; 2009.



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Each facet of the sign design and location have been established to guide motorists to the Project site beginning with the initial arrival to the area and thereafter to the driveway. Simplifying the driving task by providing proper visual cues and guidance serves to improve safety for all roadway users and facilitates efficient use of the roadway system, particularly given the number of travel lanes approaching the Tree House Brewing Company driveway (two travel lanes per direction with a westbound left-turn lane) and the prevailing speed of traffic (60 mph). Further and given the destination nature of the use, providing proper guidance is essential to maintaining safe and efficient access to the subject property.

If you should have any questions regarding our review of the design and location of the proposed monument sign for Tree House Brewing Company, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

VANASSE & ASSOCIATES, INC.



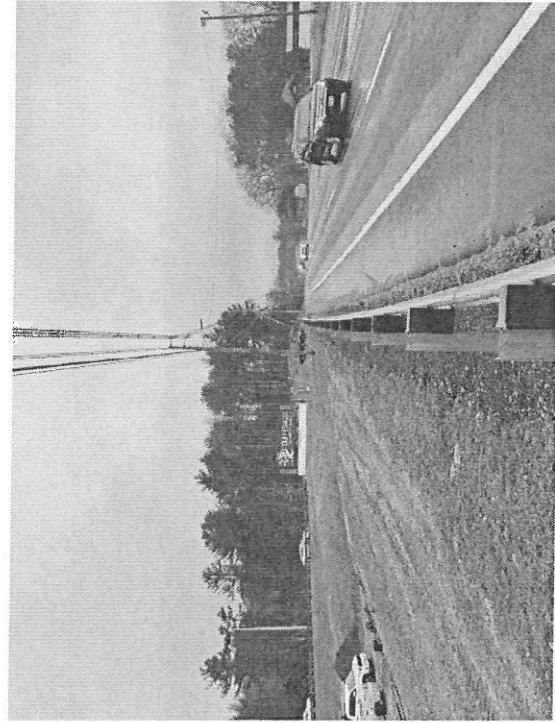
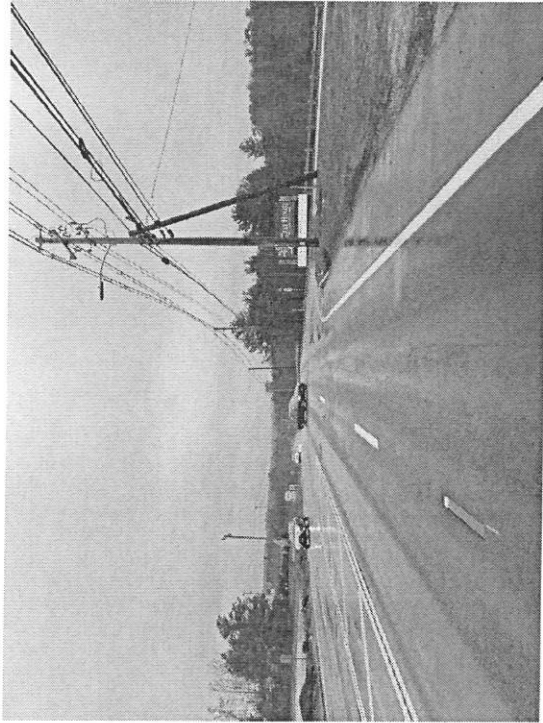
Jeffrey S. Dirk, P.E., PTOE, FITE
Managing Partner

Professional Engineer in CT, MA, ME, NH, RI and VA

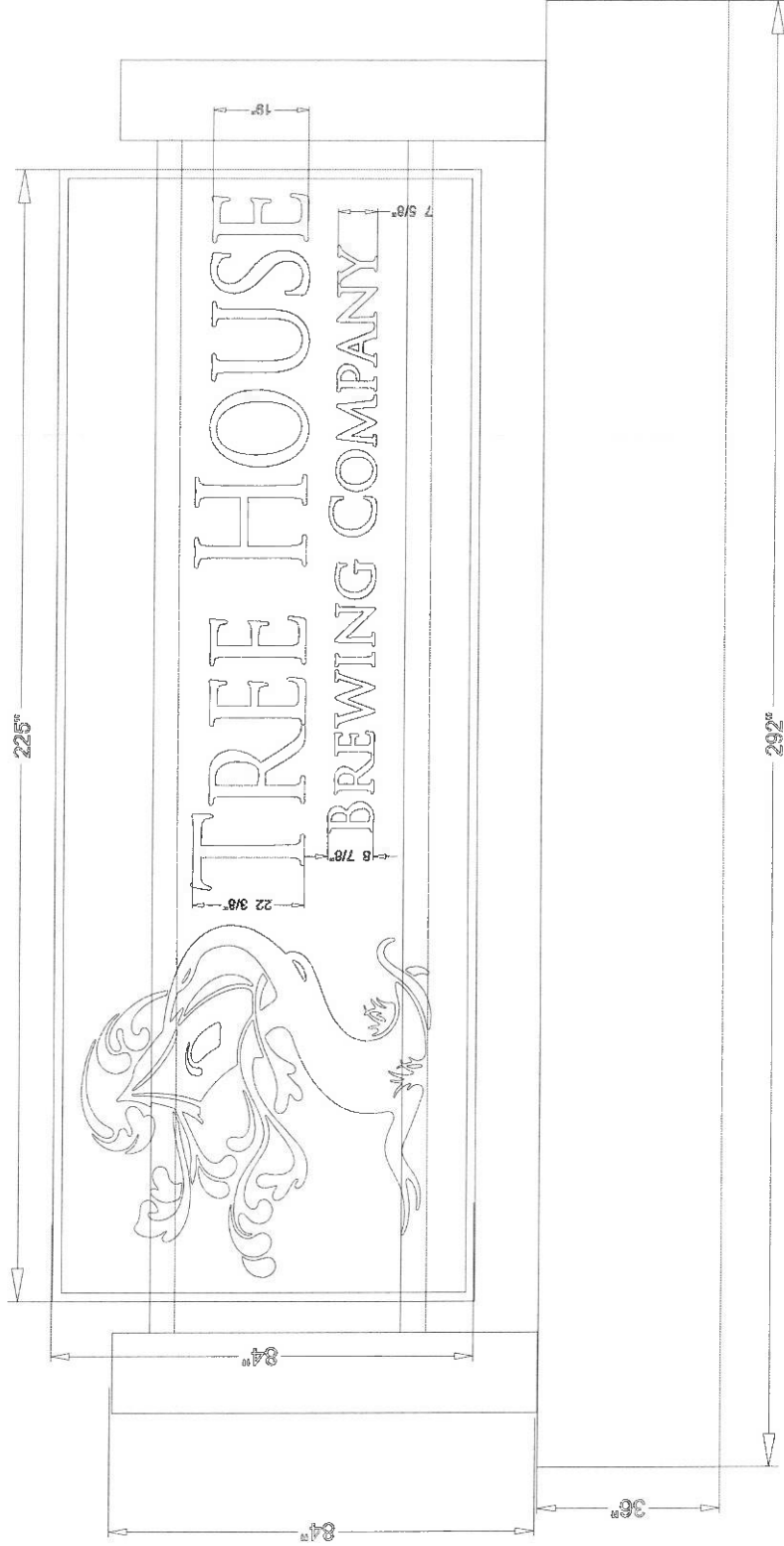
JSD/jsd

Attachments





7' x 18'-9" double faced cabinet
with wood face and
halo lit letters and logo on both sides
installed on stone base with 16" wood posts
address in carved granite
- overall height 11'



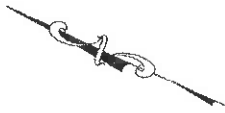
SCALE - 1/2" = 1' - 0"

TREE HOUSE BREWING
129 STURBRIDGE RD, CHARLTON, MA

4/22/2021
jgm

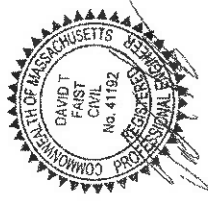
LEGEND

- N/F NOW OR FORMERLY
- EX. EXISTING
- PROP. PROPOSED
- HYDRANT
- 200 EXISTING CONTOUR LINE
- UTILITY POLE
- BIT. BITUMINOUS
- CONC. CONCRETE
- EXISTING CURB

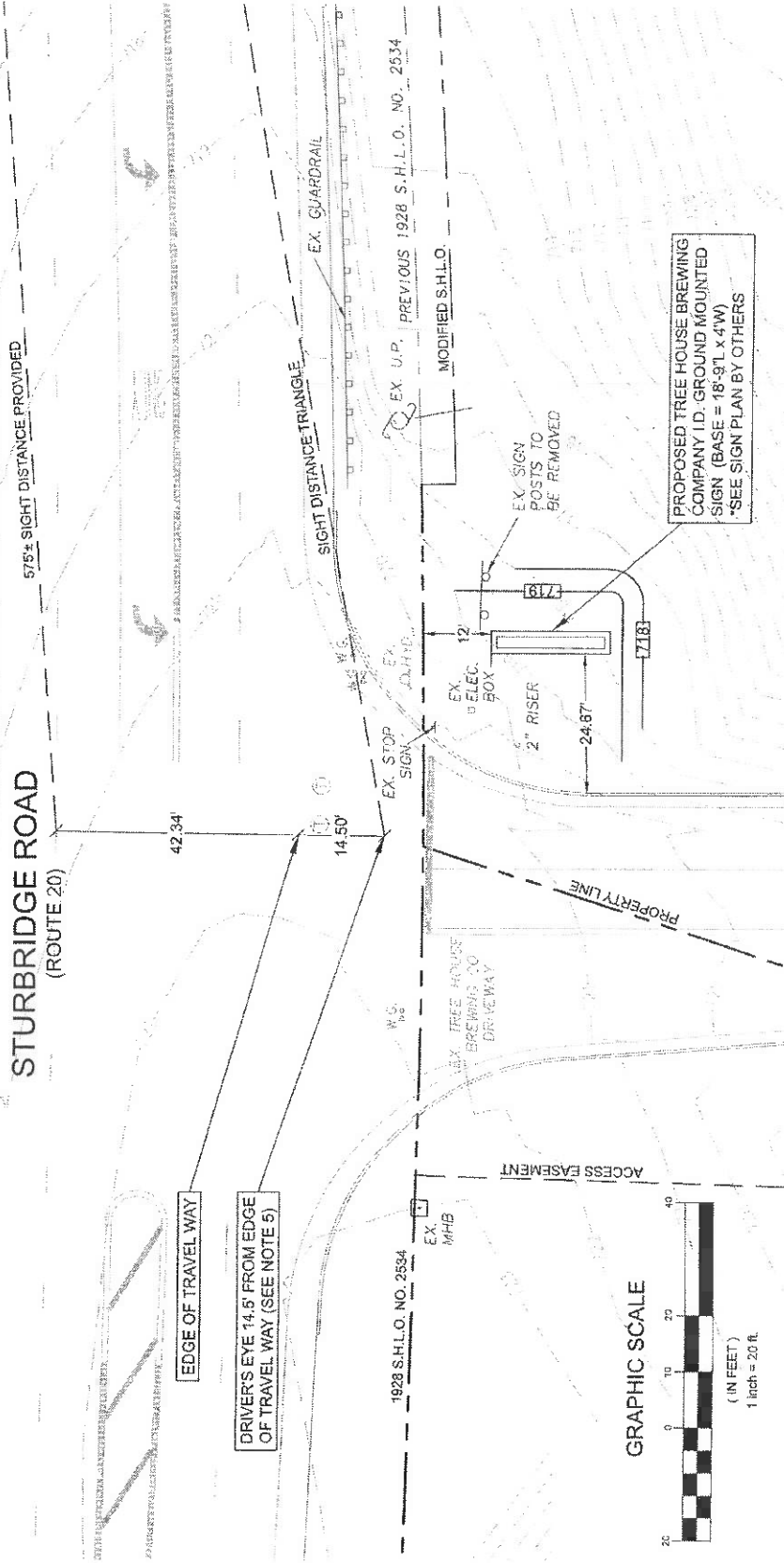


GENERAL NOTES:

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS PLAN IS TO DEPICT THE LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED TREE HOUSE BREWERY GROUND MOUNTED I.D. SIGN.
2. EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY, STATE HIGHWAY LAYOUT (S.H.L.O.), AND SITE FEATURES ARE BASED ON A PLAN ENTITLED, "STURBRIDGE ROAD (ROUTE 20) PHASE 2 OFF-SITE IMPROVEMENTS" DRAWN BY VANASSE & ASSOCIATES, INC., DATED AUGUST 2020.
3. PROPOSED SIGNAGE BASED ON "SIGN SUPPORT GENERAL PLAN", DRAWN BY TAW ASSOCIATES, DATED FEBRUARY 17, 2021.
4. SITE PROPERTY LINE TO BE VERIFIED PRIOR TO INSTALLATION OF PROPOSED GROUND MOUNTED I.D. SIGN BY A LICENSED MASSACHUSETTS PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR.
5. SIGHT DISTANCE TRIANGLE SHOWN ON SKETCH PROVIDED BY VANASSE & ASSOCIATES, INC. AND DESIGNED BASED ON THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS:
 - DESIGN SPEED = 60 MPH
 - DESIRED ISD @ 60 MPH = 575 FT.
 - REQUIRED ISD @ 60 MPH = 570 FT.

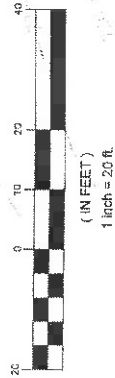


STURBRIDGE ROAD (ROUTE 20)



PROPOSED TREE HOUSE BREWERY COMPANY I.D. GROUND MOUNTED SIGN (BASE = 18'-9" X 4'-4")
*SEE SIGN PLAN BY OTHERS

GRAPHIC SCALE



NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY

PROJECT: 2021 PROPOSED MONUMENT SIGN LOCATION
 TREE HOUSE BREWERY
 #129 STURBRIDGE ROAD
 CHARLTON, MA 01507
 LANDREAU REALTY, LLC.
 129 STURBRIDGE ROAD
 CHARLTON, MA 01507

ENGINEERING SERVICES
 ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
 67 Hall Road
 Sturbridge, MA 01560
 Phone: 774-241-0901
 Fax: 774-241-0908



DATE: 4/15/2021
 DRAWN BY: [Name]
 CHECKED BY: [Name]
 PROJECT NO.: [Number]
 SHEET NO.: [Number]
 TOTAL SHEETS: [Number]

PROPOSED SIGN LOCATION
SK-1.0