

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division Report**Variance Request
BZZ-3249****Date:** October 19, 2006**Applicant:** David Motzenbecker**Address of Property:** 1000 2nd Street South**Contact Person and Phone:** David Motzenbecker, 612-35-9144**Planning Staff and Phone:** Molly McCartney, 612-673-5811**Date Application Deemed Complete:** September 27, 2006**Public Hearing Date:** October 19, 2006**Appeal Period Expiration:** October 30, 2006**End of 60 Day Decision Period:** November 27, 2006**Ward:** 7 **Neighborhood Organization:** Downtown East**Existing Zoning:** C3A Community Commercial Corridor District**Proposed Use:** Installation of a new sign**Proposed Variance:** A variance to allow for a 172 sq. ft. freestanding sign for a park for the property at 1000 2nd Street South in the C3A Community Center Activity District**Zoning code section authorizing the requested variance:** 525.520 (21)

Background: The subject site is a park development, called Gold Medal Park, bounded by 2nd Street South, 11th Avenue South and West River Parkway. The new park is just southeast of the new Guthrie Theater. The park is one zoning lot, which is multiple parcels in common ownership with the same zoning classification, and approximately 7.5 acres in size. The applicant is proposed a one large freestanding sign to identify the park along the 2nd Street South frontage. The sign's 4 ft. tall letters will run a length of 43 ft. for a total of 172 sq. ft. which exceeds the maximum 80 sq. ft. for a freestanding sign in the C3A District. The sign is proposed to be located along 2nd Street South, near the intersection of 10th Avenue South and 2nd Street South.

The park received approvals from the Heritage Preservation Commission in July 2006 because it is in the St. Anthony Fall Historic District and contains possible archaeological ruins of multiple mills that once stood on the property.

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

- 1. The property cannot be put to a reasonable use under the conditions allowed by the official controls and strict adherence to the regulations of this zoning ordinance would cause undue hardship.**

Strict adherence to the zoning code allows for a freestanding sign but limits the size to 80 sq. ft. The applicant states that due to the large size of the park and the desire to minimize sign clutter, one large freestanding sign is proposed. While a smaller sign would be permitted, staff believes the proposed sign a reasonable use due to the large size of the parcel to be used for park purposes in a heavily developed area of Downtown Minneapolis.

- 2. The circumstances are unique to the parcel of land for which the variance is sought and have not been created by any persons presently having an interest in the property. Economic considerations alone shall not constitute an undue hardship if reasonable use for the property exists under the terms of the ordinance.**

The circumstances are unique to the parcel of land and have not been created by the applicant. The subject site is a large privately owned open space to be used for public space with one identification sign in a heavily developed area of Downtown Minneapolis. This park will not be owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, but will function like a public park. Staff believes that a large identification sign for a public space, such as a park, in a heavily developed area of Downtown Minneapolis is a unique circumstance.

- 3. The granting of the variance will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not alter the essential character of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity.**

Granting the variance will be keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not alter the character of the area. The intent of many of the freestanding sign regulations is to prevent sign clutter and reduce the impact of signage on surround properties. The park is located on a 7.5 acre park in a developed area of Downtown Minneapolis adjacent to the Guthrie Theater as well as residential and office uses. The size of the park limits the impact the sign will have on adjacent uses.

- 4. The proposed variance will not substantially increase the congestion of the public streets, or increase the danger of fire, or be detrimental to the public welfare or endanger the public safety.**

Granting the variance would likely have no impact on the congestion of area streets or fire safety, nor would the proposed structure be detrimental to the public welfare or endanger the public safety.

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for a sign adjustment:

- 1. The sign adjustment will not significantly increase or lead to sign clutter in the area or result in a sign that is inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning district in which the property is located.**

Staff believes that the proposed freestanding sign is in scale with the 7.5 acre park and other signs and buildings in the area. While the subject site is very large, only one sign is proposed for the entire site. The propose sign will not lead to sign clutter and is consistent for a park located within a heavily developed area such as this section of Downtown Minneapolis.

- 2. The sign adjustment will allow a sign of exceptional design or style that will enhance the area or that is more consistent with the architecture and design of the site.**

The proposed sign will be made of stainless steel and is intended to reflect the industrial mill and railroad history of the site and surrounding area as well as current development, including the Guthrie Theater. The sign will be uplit and will be surrounded by landscaped planting bed. Staff believe that the design of the sign consistent with the site and surrounding area.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the findings above and approve the variance to allow for a 172 sq. ft. freestanding sign for a park for the property at 1000 2nd Street South in the C3A Community Center Activity District.