

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division Report

Variance Request
BZZ-4023

Date: May 22, 2008

Applicant: Steven Hirtz of Nordquist Signs, on behalf of St. Mary's University

Address of Property: 2304 Park Avenue

Contact Person and Phone: Steven Hirtz, 952-656-4447

Planning Staff and Phone: Molly McCartney, 612-673-5811

Date Application Deemed Complete: April 15, 2008

Publication Date:

Hearing Date

Appeal Period Expiration: June 2, 2008

End of 60 Day Decision Period: June 15, 2008

Ward: 6 **Neighborhood Organization:** Philips West

Existing Zoning: OR3 Institutional Office Residence District and NP North Phillips Overlay District

Proposed Use: Two freestanding signs

Proposed Variances:

- A variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two,
 - A variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft., and
 - A variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.
- to allow for two freestanding signs at 2304 Park Avenue in the OR3 Institutional Office Residence District and NP North Phillips Overlay District.

Zoning code section authorizing the requested variance: 525.520 (21)

Background: The subject site is a building for the St. Mary's University campus in south Minneapolis located at 2304 Park Avenue. This building is located on the west side of Park Avenue, mid-block between East 22nd Street and East 24th Street. The St. Mary's campus in South Minneapolis currently consists of four properties, with the subject site being the northern most building. The other sites are

south of this site, locate at 2440 Park, 2450 Park and 2500 Park Avenue. The southern building have monument signs similar to the proposed signage.

The subject site currently has one monument sign. The applicants are proposed to replace this sign and to install a second freestanding sign. The first sign identifies the building as the North Building of the St. Mary's campus in Minneapolis. This sign meets the height and size requirements for a freestanding sign. This sign is located on the property closer to the 2304 Park Avenue building. The second freestanding sign will be located further away from the building at 2304 Park Avenue, toward the north end of the building. This sign will identify the campus in general. This sign is 15 ft. in height and 82.5 sq. ft. which exceed the height and size for freestanding signs. In addition, the zoning code limits the number of freestanding signs to one in the OR3.

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.**

Variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two:

The applicant is proposing to install a second freestanding sign for the St. Mary's University campus in south Minneapolis. The south Minneapolis campus spans multiple lots along Park Avenue and the two freestanding signs would be advertising the north building and the campus as a whole. Due to the large, non-contiguous campus, a second freestanding sign on this lot is a reasonable use for the property and will assist in wayfinding.

A variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft. and a variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.

The proposed freestanding sign is almost twice as tall and in area than what is allowed. Even though there may be hardship in wayfinding due to the non-contiguous location of the campus buildings along Park Avenue, there is not hardship to increase the actual size of freestanding sign allowed.

- 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.**

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The proposed freestanding sign is almost twice as tall and in area than what is allowed. Even though there may be hardship in wayfinding due to the non-contiguous location of the campus buildings along Park Avenue, there is not hardship to increase the actual size of freestanding sign allowed. Views along Park Avenue, which is a one-way, are not obstructed by buildings or other impediments.

- 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.**

Variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two:

The intent of the on-premise sign regulations is to ensure quality signage and to limit sign clutter on buildings as well as freestanding signs. Due to the large size of the subject property as well as the non-contiguous campus, the additional freestanding sign will not adversely impact the property or surrounding properties, given that it meets the height and size requirements. Due to Park Avenue being a one-way street and this building is the northern most building of the campus, the need for identifying signage is less because it is assumed drivers and pedestrians would have been able to identify the more southern buildings.

A variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft. and a variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.

The intent of the on-premise sign regulations is to ensure quality signage and to limit sign clutter on buildings as well as freestanding signs. The request to double the height and size of a freestanding sign may result in a sign that is compatible with other signs on St. Mary's property, however, two large freestanding signs will add to sign clutter in the area. In addition, due to Park Avenue being a one-way street and this building is the northern most building of the campus, the need for identifying signage is less because it is assumed drivers and pedestrians would have been able to identify the more southern buildings.

- 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.**

Variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two, a variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft., and a variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.:

Granting the variances would not likely increase congestion in the area or increase the danger of fire safety, nor would the proposed parking reduction variance be detrimental to welfare or public safety. The height of the sign will not obstruct views or pedestrians in the public sidewalk due to the location away from the sidewalk.

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.**

Variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two:

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The intent of the on-premise sign regulations is to ensure quality signage and to limit sign clutter on buildings as well as freestanding signs. The request to double the height and size of a freestanding sign may result in a sign that is compatible with other signs on St. Mary's property, however, two large freestanding signs will add to sign clutter in the area. In addition, due to Park Avenue being a one-way street and this building is the northern most building of the campus, the need for identifying signage is less because it is assumed drivers and pedestrians would have been able to identify the more southern buildings.

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.**

Variance to increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two, a variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft., and a variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.:

The proposed signs are aluminum sign cabinet with a similar design to the other St. Mary's University campus signs. The signs are internally lit, with only the text being illuminated. The signs are in keeping with the other campus signs.

CPED Planning Division Report
BZZ-4023

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 increase the number of freestanding signs on a zoning lot from one to two, subject to the following conditions:

1. CPED–Planning Division review and approve the final sign plan. All drawings will be measured to an architect or engineer’s scale.

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the findings above and **deny** the following variances:

- A variance to increase the maximum size of a freestanding sign from 32 sq. ft. to 82.5 sq. ft., and
 - A variance to increase the maximum height of a freestanding sign from 8 ft. to 15 ft.
- to allow for two freestanding signs at 2304 Park Avenue in the OR3 Institutional Office Residence District and NP North Phillips Overlay District