

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Conditional Use Permit and Variances
BZZ-4843

Date: July 19, 2010

Applicant: Russ Williams with the University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital

Address of Property: 2414 7th Street South and 2406 Riverside Avenue

Project Name: University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital

Contact Person and Phone: Mike Pankey with Landmark Architectural Signs, (952) 292-2141

Planning Staff and Phone: Hilary Dvorak, (612) 673-2639

Date Application Deemed Complete: June 25, 2010

End of 60-Day Decision Period: August 24, 2010

End of 120-Day Decision Period: Not applicable for this application

Ward: 2 Neighborhood Organization: Cedar Riverside

Existing Zoning: OR3, Institutional Office Residence District and the MP Mississippi River Overlay District

Proposed Zoning: Not applicable for this application

Zoning Plate Number: 21

Legal Description: Not applicable for this application

Proposed Use: Hospital

Concurrent Review:

Conditional use permit: to allow two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts. One of the wall signs will measure approximately 320 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 105 feet above grade. The other wall sign will measure approximately 206 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 112 feet above grade.

Variance: to increase the size of a wall sign permitted under the conditional use permit from 300 square feet to 320 square feet.

Variance: to allow a wall sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall.

Variance: to increase the height of a wall sign from 14 feet to 15 feet.

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 525, Article VII, Conditional Use Permits and Chapter 525, Article IX, Variances, specifically Section 525.520(21) “to vary the number, type, height, area or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown or industrial district, pursuant to Chapter 543, On-Premise Signs”.

Background: In December of 2007 the City Planning Commission approved a number of land use applications to allow for an expansion of the University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital, Fairview campus. The addition that was approved is located along Riverside Avenue between 24th and 25th Avenues. The addition is physically connected to the existing hospital complex. The addition is 250,000 square feet in size and is nine stories in height (seven floors). The principal entrance to the building faces 25th Avenue South. There is a circular driveway along 25th Avenue South which provides a drop off location for patients, visitors and employees. Also located along 25th Avenue South is the entrance to the underground parking garage.

The addition will centralize pediatric and ambulatory care services on the Riverside campus whereas now the services are split between the University campus and the Riverside campus. The new facility will house inpatient care units, a dialysis center and a sedation and observation unit. As part of the addition a portion of the existing hospital will also be renovated and will house the emergency department and operating rooms, an imaging department, peri-operative and cardiovascular services and a radiation oncology center. The principal entrance to the emergency department is located off of vacated 24th Avenue South. The addition is currently under construction.

Today the applicant is requesting land use applications for three identification signs on the building. Two of the signs will be located towards the top of the building which will help identify the building from the nearby Interstate and the neighborhood streets. The third sign will be located above the emergency department entrance which is now no longer located off of a public street.

One of the identification signs reads “University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital” and is located on the east side of the building. This sign is approximately 300 square feet in size and will be installed at a height approximately 105 feet above grade. The other identification sign reads “M” and is located on the south side of the building. This sign is approximately 206 square feet in size and will be installed at a height approximately 112 feet above grade. Both of these signs will be made up of individual letters illuminated by white LED halo illumination. The emergency department entrance sign reads “Children’s Emergency” and is located on the west side of the building. This sign is approximately 46 square feet and will be installed at a height of approximately 11.5 feet above grade. This sign would be made up of individual letters illuminated by red LED illumination.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT - to allow two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts. One of the wall signs will measure approximately 300 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 105 feet above grade. The other wall sign will measure approximately 206 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 112 feet above grade.

Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

The Community Planning and Economic Development Department – Planning Division has analyzed the application and from the findings above concludes that:

1. The establishment, maintenance, or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, comfort or general welfare.

The Planning Division does not believe that allowing the installation of two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts would be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, comfort or general welfare. One of the wall signs will measure approximately 300 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 105 feet above grade. The other wall sign will measure approximately 206 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 112 feet above grade. The applicant has indicated that the signs are proposed to be located near the top of the building so the hospital can be identified from the nearby Interstate and the neighborhood streets.

2. The conditional use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal or orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

The Planning Division does not believe that allowing the installation of two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts would be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal or orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.. The applicant has indicated that other surrounding uses, including Augsburg College, the Riverside Professional Building and other hospital buildings, have signs located towards the top of them which help to identify the use from a distance.

3. Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, necessary facilities or other measures, have been or will be provided.

The applicant will be working closely with the Plan Review Section of the Inspections Department and the various utility companies during the installation of the wall signs to ensure that all procedures are followed in order to comply with city and other applicable requirements.

4. Adequate measures have been or will be taken to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.

Adding signage to the building will not impact traffic congestion in the public streets.

5. The conditional use is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.

The site is located on the hospital campus between Riverside Avenue and the Mississippi River and 22nd Avenue South and 26th Avenue South. Riverside Avenue is designated as a Commercial Corridor in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. The future land use map in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth* designates this site as Public and Institutional. According to the principles and polices outlined in *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*, the following apply to this proposal:

- Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage (Urban Design Policy 10.20).
- Master sign plans shall be submitted for multi-tenant buildings to ensure a complementary relationship between signage and the architecture of a building (Implementation Step for Urban Design Policy 10.20).
- Unique areas and neighborhoods within the city should have a special set of sign standards to allow for effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each area/neighborhood (Urban Design Policy 10.21).

The Planning Division believes that the proposed signage is in conformance with the above policies of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*. The new signs would be made up of individual letters illuminated by LED illumination.

The *Cedar Riverside Small Area Plan* was adopted by the Minneapolis City Council in April of 2008. Although there are land use and design recommendations in the small area plan none of them discuss signage.

6. The conditional use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

With the approval of the conditional use permit and the variances the development will meet the applicable regulations of the zoning district.

543.510. Approval criteria. Adjustments to the number, type, height, area or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown or industrial district may be approved if the following criteria are met:

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.

The Planning Division does not believe that the installation of two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts would lead to sign clutter. The OR3 Institutional Office Residence District is established to provide a mixed use environment of very high density dwellings, large office uses, and major institutions, with additional small scale retail sales and services uses designed to serve the immediate surroundings. Given the size of the hospital campus and its unique needs for identification allowing two wall signs to be placed near the top of the building would not be inconsistent with the OR3 zoning district.

2. The sign adjustment will allow a sign that relates in size, shape, materials, color, illumination and character to the function and architectural character of the building or property on which the sign will be located.

The addition to which these signs are being located on is 250,000 square feet in size and is nine stories in height. The exterior material of the building is a translucent metal. The “University of Minnesota Amplatz Children’s Hospital” sign will be made of individual aluminum letters that are internally illuminated by white LED halo illumination. The “M” sign will be made of the same material as the building and will be internally illuminated by white LED halo illumination. The Planning Division believes that both of these signs relate to the function and architectural character of the building.

VARIANCE - to increase the size of a wall sign permitted under the conditional use permit from 300 square feet to 320 square feet

The applicant was able to eliminate six inches of space between the two lines of the sign which reduced the overall size of the sign to 300 square feet. Given this the Planning Division is returning this application.

VARIANCE - to allow a wall sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall

Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for the Variance:

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

Sign location: The applicant is seeking a variance to allow a wall sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall. The addition will centralize pediatric and ambulatory care services on the Riverside campus whereas now the services are split between the University campus and the Riverside campus. The new facility will house inpatient care units, a dialysis center and a sedation and observation unit. As part of the addition a portion of the existing hospital will also be renovated and will house the emergency department and operating rooms, an imaging department, peri-operative and cardiovascular services and a radiation oncology center. The principal entrance to the emergency department is located off of vacated 24th Avenue South. Since 24th Avenue South was vacated the entrance to the emergency department is now located on a non-primary building wall. Not allowing a sign over the entrance to the emergency department because it is located on a non-primary building wall would be a hardship. It is of dire importance that the emergency department entrance be clearly identified for those needing to find it during an emergency.

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.

Sign location: The fact that the emergency department entrance is located on a non-primary building wall is a unique circumstance of this parcel of land.

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.

Sign location: The purpose of the sign chapter regulations are established to allow effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each zoning district, to promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion, to minimize adverse effects on nearby property, and to protect the public health, safety and welfare. The Planning Division believes that 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. The hospital owns the building on both sides of vacated 24th Avenue South.

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.

Sign location: The Planning Division believes that the granting of the variance would likely have little impact on fire safety, nor would the proposed variance be detrimental to welfare. Granting the variance should reduce congestion of area streets and improve public safety as the proposed sign will clearly identify the emergency department for those needing to find it during an emergency.

543.510. Approval criteria. Adjustments to the number, type, height, area or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown or industrial district may be approved if the following criteria are met:

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.

The proposed sign is the only sign located near the emergency department entrance. Given this the Planning Division does not believe that the proposed sign would lead to sign clutter.

2. The sign adjustment will allow a sign that relates in size, shape, materials, color, illumination and character to the function and architectural character of the building or property on which the sign will be located.

The portion of the building where the “Children’s Emergency” sign will be located is made out of glass. The “Children’s Emergency” sign will be made of individual aluminum letters that are internally illuminated by red LED halo illumination. The Planning Division believes that this sign relates to the function and architectural character of the building.

VARIANCE - to increase the height of a wall sign from 14 feet to 15 feet

Sign height is calculated as the vertical distance from the natural grade measured at a point either at the curb level or ten feet away from the front center of the sign, whichever is closer, to the upper-most point used in measuring the area of a sign. In this case the overall height of the sign is measured from a point ten feet away from the front center of the sign. After reviewing the approved building permits for the addition the Planning Division has determined that the overall height of the sign is 11.5 feet. Given this the Planning Division is returning this application.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the conditional use permit:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the conditional use permit application to allow two wall signs notwithstanding the height and area limits of Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts. One of the wall signs will measure approximately 300 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 105 feet above grade. The other wall sign will measure approximately 206 square feet and will be installed at a height approximately 112 feet above grade located at 2414 7th Street South and 2406 Riverside Avenue subject to the following conditions:

1. The conditional use permit shall be recorded with Hennepin County as required by Minn. Stat. 462.3595, subd. 4 before building permits may be issued or before the use or activity requiring a conditional use permit may commence. Unless extended by the zoning administrator, the conditional use permit shall expire if it is not recorded within one year of approval.
2. Approval of the final sign plans by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **return** the variance application to increase the size of a wall sign permitted under the conditional use permit from 300 square feet to 320 square feet located at 2414 7th Street South and 2406 Riverside Avenue.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends

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that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the variance application to allow a wall sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall located at 2414 7th Street South and 2406 Riverside Avenue.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **return** the variance application to increase the height of a wall sign from 14 feet to 15 feet located at 2414 7th Street South and 2406 Riverside Avenue.

Attachments:

1. Statement of proposed use
2. Conditional use permit and variance findings
3. Elevations and photo simulations of the building showing the location of the proposed signs
4. September 29, 2009, letter to Council Member Gordon and the West Bank Community Coalition
5. Zoning Map
6. Site plan and building elevations
7. Sign plans/details
8. Photos of the building and the existing signage