

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division Report

Variance Request
BZZ-3106

Date: July 20, 2006

Applicant: Cammy Monnens of Sign-a-rama

Address of Property: 718 Washington Avenue North

Contact Person and Phone: Cammy Monnens, 651-644-4352

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

Date Application Deemed Complete: June 26, 2006

Public Hearing Date: July 20, 2006

Appeal Period Expiration: July 31, 2006

End of 60 Day Decision Period: August 25, 2006

Ward: 7 **Neighborhood Organization:** North Loop Neighborhood Association

Existing Zoning: I2 Medium Industrial District, IL Industrial Living Overlay District

Proposed Use: Installation of a new sign

Proposed Variance: A variance to increase the maximum height of an on-premise advertising sign from 24 ft. off the ground to 35 ft. off the ground at 718 Washington Avenue North in the I2 Medium Industrial District and IL Industrial Living Overlay District.

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

Background: The subject site is a renovated 6 story warehouse, called the Soho Condominiums, which contains commercial uses on the first four floors and residential work/live dwelling units on the fifth and sixth floors. The applicant is proposing to locate a new 4 ft. by 18 ft. (72 sq. ft.) sign to advertising the name of the building. The proposed sign will be doubled-sided letters, reading “SOHO” and will be lit internally with a red LED (light emitting diodes) and two of the letters will also be covered with perforated metal. The proposed sign will be located between the second and third floors of the building which will be 35 ft. off the ground. In the I2 District, the maximum height for a sign is 24 ft.

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 requires that a sign be no more than 25 ft. from the ground in the I2 District. The applicant states that the variance is required because the large size of the building dwarfs signage on the building and that there are other signs in the area that exceed the maximum height. While the visibility of the sign may be impacted by the size of the building and the street, a sign can still be installed on the building. Staff believes that a proposed sign that meets the maximum height requirement is a reasonable use.

- 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 not unique to the parcel of land and have been created by the applicant. While the size of the building and the width of the street have not been created by the application, the design and height of the sign has been. This building is similar to other buildings in the North Loop neighborhood and many multi-story buildings in commercial and industrial zoning districts are subject to similar height requirements for signs.

- 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.**

The granting of the variance will be keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not alter the character of the surrounding area. The applicant has submitted pictures of a number of other commercial signs along Washington Avenue North that are located on reused warehouses between the second and third floor. The design of the proposed sign is consistent with these signs. In addition, the first four floors of this building are commercial uses and would not be impacted greatly by a lit sign at night. The residential units in this building are located on the fifth and sixth floors, much higher than the proposed sign location, and will not be impacted by the lit sign at night.

- 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 wall sign is in scale with the building and the area. The sign will be consistent with other requirements of the I2 zoning district such as maximum size per sign and type of lighting allowed. The sign height is similar to other signs along Washington Avenue North.

- 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 sign will be of a comparable design of another signs along Washington Avenue North and is consistent with the design of the building. The proposed sign will be doubled-sided letters, reading “SOHO” and will be lit internally with a red LED (light emitting diodes) and two of the letters will also be covered with perforated metal.

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 **deny** the variance to increase the maximum height of an on-premise advertising sign from 24 ft. off the ground to 35 ft. off the ground at 718 Washington Avenue North in the I2 Medium Industrial District and IL Industrial Living Overlay District.