

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division Report

Variance Request
BZZ-4034

Date: June 5, 2008

Applicants: The Marquette Hotel

Address of Property: 710 Marquette Avenue

Contact Person and Phone: Travis Farniok: Crawford, Merz, Anderson Corporation (612) 874-9011

Planning Staff and Phone: Carol Ahlgren (612) 673-2847

Date Application Deemed Complete: May 8, 2008

Publication Date: May 22, 2008

Public Hearing: June 12, 2008

Appeal Period Expiration: June 23, 2008

End of 60 Day Decision Period: July 8, 2008

Ward: 1 **Neighborhood Organization:** Downtown West

Existing Zoning: B4-2 Downtown Business District; DP Downtown Parking Overlay District; NM Nicollet Mall Overlay District

Public Comment: CPED notified property owners within 350 ft. of the variance request.

Proposed Use: One freestanding sign

Proposed Variance: A variance to increase the height of a free-standing sign from 8 feet to 15 feet.

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

Background: The Marquette Hotel is proposing the installation of a free-standing sign at its location at 710 Marquette Avenue. The site is zoned B4-2 Downtown Business District and is also located in the Downtown Parking and Nicollet Mall Overlay Districts. The proposed freestanding sign will be located at the southeast corner of 7th Street and Marquette Avenue on the hotel property. The zoning code limits freestanding signs to a maximum signage area of 32 square feet and a maximum height of eight (8) feet. The letters on the sign will meet the height requirement, but the sign itself will be 15 feet tall.

The proposed sign is part of a redesign of the Marquette Avenue main entrance; the existing brown canvas structural canopy will be removed and a structural steel and glass canopy entrance will be constructed. The proposed sign will be a four-sided with a 4 foot wide base and an irregularly shaped top, constructed of structural steel to complement the new entrance. The sign will have a light bollard in the middle. Three sides of the sign will have lettering: the Marquette logo will be located on the north and south elevations and the east elevation will feature the words The Marquette Hotel, the logo and "Basil's Restaurant." The west elevation facing the hotel will be without signage. The total square footage for the proposed signage is 20 square feet, which is within the permitted amount of a maximum of 821 square feet for all businesses located on 7th Street between Marquette and Nicollet.

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.**

The applicant requests a variance to increase the maximum height of a free standing sign from 8 feet to 15 feet. The proposed free-standing sign is desired to give visibility to the hotel entrance from Marquette Avenue. The existing entry only has frontage on 7th Street; the entrance is not visible from Marquette Avenue. Limiting the identification signage to one sign and requiring the size and height to be reduced could be a hardship, because it would not allow the applicant to provide reasonable identification signage for their location.

- 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 site will not have significant identification signage on the building following the redesign of the entrance, and has large landscaping planters at the corner of the building. Given the scale of the IDS Center and the hotel's location at the intersection of 7th Street and Marquette Avenue, this makes it more necessary to have an additional sign that is larger than the height requirement of the code.

- 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 intent of the ordinance is to allow effective signage appropriate to the character of each zoning district, to promote an attractive environment by limiting visual clutter and confusion, and to minimize effects on nearby properties. The zoning code allows for a maximum of 821 square feet of signage along 7th street between Marquette and Nicollet. The amount of signage, including the new free-standing sign, will result in a total of 270 square feet of signage.

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

In addition to the conditional use standards contained in Chapter 525 and this article, the City Planning Commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when determining sign variances:

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

The proposed sign will not lead to clutter. The amount of signage is being reduced from 32 square feet on the existing hotel to 20 square feet on the new design which is within the requirements for the location. Given the scale of the IDS Center the signage on the new freestanding sign will not add to clutter. The height of the lettering on the sign is consistent with the 8 feet required by the zoning code. The sign will not be out of character for its downtown location.

- 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 professionally constructed and installed. The material and lettering will enhance the new entrance design and the overall building in terms of scale and massing. The sign will be an exceptional design and style that is compatible with the architecture and design of the site.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development Planning Division recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the staff findings above and **approve** the variance to allow for an increase in maximum height for a free-standing sign from 8 feet to 15 feet with the following condition.

1. CPED-Planning review and approve final site plan, floor plans, and elevations.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Zoning map

Appendix B: Application

Appendix C: Letter of support from neighborhood association