

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Variance
BZZ-5734

Date: September 13, 2012

Applicant: Open Access Technology International, Inc.

Address of Property: 3660 Technology Drive NE

Contact Person and Phone: David Heim, (763) 201-2000

Planning Staff and Phone: Shanna Sether, (612) 673-2307

Date Application Deemed Complete: August 20, 2012

End of 60 Day Decision Period: October 19, 2012

Ward: 1 Neighborhood Organization: Columbia Park Neighborhood Association

Existing Zoning: I1 Light Industrial District, MR Mississippi River Critical Area Overlay District and SH Shoreland Overlay District

Proposed Use: Two wall signs for an existing office building

Variance: to increase the maximum height of two walls signs from 28 feet to approximately 46 feet 8 inches

Zoning code section authorizing the requested variance: Chapter 525, Article IX Variances, Specifically Section 525.520(21) “to vary the number, type, height, area or location of allowed signs...”

Background: The subject property is approximately 20 acres and includes an existing 3-story office building with accessory parking. The applicant is proposing to install two walls signs to the existing building wall. One will be located on the front of the building facing northeast towards the intersection of 37th Avenue NE and Technology Drive. The other sign would be located on the rear wall, facing southwest towards the 42nd Avenue Bridge. Both signs will be made up of internally illuminated channel letters and a logo and will be approximately 15 feet wide by 11 feet long (165 square feet). Both of the proposed signs would be located at a height of approximately 46 feet 8 inches, measured from the adjacent grade. The maximum height of wall signage in the I1 Light Industrial District is 28 feet; therefore, the applicant has requested variances for the proposed height of the two new wall signs.

As of writing this staff report, staff has not received any correspondence from the Columbia Park Neighborhood Association. Staff will forward comments, if any are received, at the Board of Adjustment meeting.

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Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

VARIANCES to increase the maximum permitted height for two wall signs from 28 feet to approximately 46 feet 8 inches

- 1. Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance because of circumstances unique to the property. The unique circumstances were not created by persons presently having an interest in the property and are not based on economic considerations alone.**

The circumstances of the height variance are unique to the parcel. The applicant states the increased height of the proposed signs is due to the architectural features of the building and the unique identification needs given the size of the site and the location of the building on the site. The number of locations on the building where signage could be placed is limited due to the architecture of the building and the number of windows on the building. Further, the subject property is approximately 20 acres in size and the building is centered on the lot and is setback a significant distance from the property lines adjacent to the public streets. In addition, the site has a number of large canopy trees on it that screen the building from the surrounding streets.

- 2. The property owner or authorized applicant proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner that will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and the comprehensive plan.**

The regulations governing on-premise signs were 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 subject property is zoned I1 Light Industrial District. The proposed signage would be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance at a height of approximately 46 feet 8 inches. The size and type of signs proposed meet the requirements in the ordinance. The applicant states that the increased height is required due to the architectural features of the building and to ensure effective identification of the building to customers and those visiting the site. Each of the signs at the proposed height will be visible from traffic along 42nd Avenue North, 37th Avenue NE and Technology Drive. Locating the signs at a height of approximately 46 feet 8 inches is a reasonable use of the property.

- 3. The proposed variance will not alter the essential character of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity. If granted, the proposed variance will not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public or of those utilizing the property or nearby properties.**

The proposed signage will not alter the essential character or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of property in the vicinity. The proposed signage will be internally illuminated channel letters and a logo. Neither of the signs would front directly onto any property that would find the proposed sign overly imposing or intrusive. Granting the sign variance would not be detrimental to health, safety or welfare of the general public.

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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.**

The proposed signage is located on the front of the building, facing northeast and at the rear of the building facing southwest. These are the only wall signs located on the existing structure. There is one existing monument sign on the property located at the intersection of 37th Avenue NE and Technology Drive. The subject property is approximately 20 acres in size and the building is centered on the lot and is setback a significant distance from the property lines adjacent to the public streets. Further, the site has a number of large canopy trees on it that screen the building from the surrounding streets. The addition of the two proposed wall identification signs will not 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 proposed signs will relate in size, shape, material, color, illumination and character of the building on the property. The signs will be professionally installed with quality materials. The signage is proposed to include the logo and letters fabricated from aluminum and are internally illuminated. The proposed signage is consistent with the existing monument signage on the property.

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Variance:

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 maximum height of two walls signs from 28 feet to approximately 46 feet 8 inches for the property located at 3660 Technology Drive NE in the I1 Light Industrial District, MR Mississippi River Critical Area Overlay District and SH Shoreland Overlay District, subject to the following condition of approval:

1. Approval of the final signs plans by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division.

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Attachments:

- 1) Written descriptions and findings submitted by the applicant
- 2) Copy of e-mails sent to Council Member Reich and Columbia Park Neighborhood Association
- 3) Zoning map
- 4) Survey
- 5) Site plan
- 6) Building elevations
- 7) Sign plan
- 8) Photographs