

**Department of Community Planning and Economic Development**  
Variance  
BZZ 6160

**Date:** August 22, 2013

**Applicant:** Albrecht Sign Company

**Address of Property:** 1101 LaSalle Avenue

**Contact Person and Phone:** Jack Albrecht, (763) 754-2899

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

**Date Application Deemed Complete:** July 22, 2013

**End of 60-Day Decision Period:** September 20, 2013

**Ward:** 7      **Neighborhood Organization:** Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association

**Existing Zoning:** B4S-2 Downtown Service District

**Existing Overlay District:** DP Downtown Parking Overlay District

**Zoning Plate Number:** 19

**Proposed Use:** One new projecting sign located on an existing hotel.

**Variance:** to increase the maximum height of a projecting sign from 28 feet to 40 feet.

**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 165 feet by 165 feet (27,225 square feet) and is an existing hotel. The Hotel Luxeford was constructed on the subject property 1986. The DoubleTree Hotel and Starbucks Coffee moved in to the existing building in 2004. Previous land use approvals include a conditional use permit approved by the city planning commission in 1985 to allow for a wall sign, 120 feet in height, facing east towards Brits Pub’s outdoor patio. This sign was replaced in 2005 and refaced in 2011. The DoubleTree Hotel has additional signage along 11<sup>th</sup> Street South on the canopy, a logo approximately 110 feet in height facing LaSalle Avenue and a 68 square foot sign facing southwest towards the parking lot. The applicant is requesting to add a projecting sign at the intersection of LaSalle Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street South. The projecting sign is 2 feet 6 inches wide and 18 feet 8 inches tall and would be internally illuminated. The sign copy would include the logo and “DoubleTree Suites By Hilton”. The sign height is measured from the ground to the top of the sign. The proposed sign would be 40 feet in height. The maximum sign height in the B4S-2 District is 28 feet; therefore, the applicant is seeking a variance to increase the maximum height of the proposed projecting sign.

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

**Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:**

**VARIANCES** to increase the maximum permitted height for one new projecting signs from 28 feet to 40 feet.

- 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 for which the sign height variance is sought are not unique to the parcel and have been created by the applicant. The applicant has stated the increase in height is necessary to allow visibility of the existing hotel that the signs were proportioned to be in scale with the building and to be readable from vehicular and pedestrian approaches to the site. Staff finds that that property does not have visibility issues for motorists, pedestrians or bicyclists with the existing wall signage on all four sides of the property. An additional projecting sign would be allowed 28 feet above grade. Staff finds that the existing signage and additional signage that is permitted in the zoning code would allow for effective identification.

- 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 applicant is seeking variances to increase the height of a projecting sign from 28 feet to 40 feet. The zoning code 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. There is an existing wall sign 120 feet in height facing 11<sup>th</sup> Street South, a one-way street. LaSalle Avenue is open to two-way traffic and there are signs facing 11<sup>th</sup> Street South, LaSalle Avenue and the parking lot facing southwest. Staff finds that the proposed sign is inconsistent with the pedestrian scale and may lead to sign clutter. Staff finds that the existing signage would allow for effective site identification.

- 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 sign may alter the essential character and be injurious to the use or enjoyment of property in the vicinity. Staff finds that the proposed projecting sign, 40 feet in height will be inconsistent with the pedestrian scale. Further, the existing building has 4 wall signs and the

additional projecting sign, 40 feet in height, may lead to sign clutter. Granting the sign variances would not likely be detrimental to health, safety or welfare of the general public. The proposed sign would be internally illuminated and not have any flashing components or project light onto adjacent property or public walkways or streets.

**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.**

**Both variances:** A conditional use permit was approved by the city planning commission in 1985 to allow for a wall sign, 120 feet in height, facing east towards Brits Pub's outdoor patio. This sign was replaced in 2005 and refaced in 2011. The DoubleTree Hotel has additional signage along 11<sup>th</sup> Street South on the canopy, a logo approximately 110 feet in height facing LaSalle Avenue and a 68 square foot sign facing southwest towards the parking lot. The applicant is requesting to add a projecting sign at the intersection of LaSalle Avenue and 11<sup>th</sup> Street South. The projecting sign is 2 feet 6 inches wide and 18 feet 8 inches tall, internally illuminated and 40 feet in height. The applicant has stated the signs were proportioned to be in scale with the building and to be readable from vehicular and pedestrian approaches to the site. The zoning code 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. Staff finds that the proposed projecting sign will lead to sign clutter and is inconsistent with the purpose of the zoning district in which the property is located.

- 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.**

**Both variances:** Staff finds that the sign would relate in shape, material, color, illumination and character of the building on the property; however, the proposed sign will be out of scale at the pedestrian level. The signs will be professionally installed with quality materials. The proposed projecting sign would be constructed in an aluminum cabinet and internally illuminated.

**Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the staff findings and deny of the variance to increase the maximum height of a projecting sign from 28 feet to 40 feet for DoubleTree Hotel located at 1101 LaSalle Avenue in the B4S-2 Downtown Service District and DP Downtown Parking Overlay District.

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**Attachments:**

- 1) Written descriptions and findings submitted by the applicant
- 2) Copy of e-mails sent to Council Member Goodman and Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
- 3) Zoning map
- 4) Elevations
- 5) Sign plan
- 6) Photographs