

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development
Variance
BZZ 6218

Date: September 12, 2013

Applicant: University of Minnesota Foundation – Dinnaken House

Address of Property: 900 Washington Avenue SE

Contact Person and Phone: Pierre Willette, (612) 578-7684

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

Date Application Deemed Complete: August 15, 2013

End of 60-Day Decision Period: October 14, 2013

Ward: 2 Neighborhood Organization: Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association

Existing Zoning: OR2 High-Density Office Residence District

Existing Overlay District: PO Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District and UA University Area Overlay District

Zoning Plate Number: 15

Proposed Use: Two new monument signs

Variance: to increase the maximum number of freestanding monument signs per zoning lot from one to two for Dinnaken House, a multiple-family dwelling.

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 2.4 acres in area and is the site of Dinnakin House, a 120-unit, student housing use. The applicant is proposing to add two new non-illuminated monument signs to the property. One sign would be located at the intersection of Washington Avenue SE and Huron Boulevard SE and the second sign would be located 430 feet away at the intersection of Washington Avenue SE and Ontario Street SE. The proposed signs would be 3 feet 4 inches tall and the sign copy would be approximately 20 square feet in area. The zoning code limits the number of freestanding signs to one per zoning lot. Therefore, the applicant is requesting a variance to allow for two freestanding monument signs.

Staff has not received correspondence from the Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association. Staff will forward comments, if any are received, at the Board of Adjustment meeting.

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code:

VARIANCE: to increase the maximum number of freestanding monument signs per zoning lot from one to two for Dinnaken House, a multiple-family dwelling

- 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 variance is sought are unique to the parcel and have not been created by the applicant. The subject property is approximately 2.4 acres and approximately 500 students reside on premises and has frontage along three public streets. One sign would be located at the intersection of Washington Avenue SE and Huron Boulevard SE and the second sign would be located 430 feet away at the intersection of Washington Avenue SE and Ontario Street SE. The applicant has indicated that the additional sign is necessary to identify the building and use for occupants and visitors. Staff finds that that property does have visibility issues and the additional freestanding sign would allow for effective identification for the building.

- 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 a variance to increase the maximum number of freestanding monument signs per zoning lot from one to two for Dinnaken House, a multiple-family dwelling. 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 signage is consistent with the pedestrian scale and staff finds that one additional monument sign would allow for effective site identification, without adverse effects, including visual clutter.

- 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. Staff finds that the two proposed freestanding monument signs are consistent with the pedestrian scale and staff finds that one additional monument sign that complies with the sign regulations would allow for effective site identification. Granting the sign variance would not be detrimental to health, safety or welfare of the general public, by adding visual clutter or confusion. The proposed sign would be non-illuminated and would 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.**

The applicant has stated that the two proposed freestanding monument signs were intended to identify the building and use to residents and visitors. The subject property is approximately 2.4 acres and has frontage along three public streets, Washington Avenue SE, Ontario Street SE and Huron Boulevard SE. 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 two proposed freestanding monument signs are consistent with the pedestrian scale and staff finds that one additional monument sign that complies with the sign regulations would allow for effective site identification.

- 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.**

Staff finds that the proposed signs would 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 proposed freestanding monument signs would be masonry and non-illuminated. The base of the sign is required to be landscaped in accordance with section 543.360(c) of the zoning code:

543.360. Freestanding signs. (a)*In general.* Except for auxiliary, political, portable, project information, real estate and temporary signs, decorative banners, menu boards and signs accessory to parking lots, not more than one (1) freestanding sign shall be permitted on a zoning lot, except as otherwise permitted in this section.

(b) *Public and institutional uses in the OR2 and OR3 Office Residence Districts.*

Notwithstanding Table 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts, not more than one (1) freestanding sign shall be permitted per frontage.

(c) *Base of sign.* Landscaping or other decorative materials designed to screen the base of the freestanding sign and any light fixtures shall be provided. Such landscape or decorative materials shall be capable of screening the base of the sign all year and shall be well maintained.

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 staff findings and **approve** the variance to increase the maximum number of freestanding monument signs per zoning lot from one to two for Dinnaken House, a multiple-family dwelling located at 900 Washington Avenue SE in the OR2 High-Density Office Residence District, PO Pedestrian Oriented Overlay District and UA University Area Overlay District, subject to the following conditions of approval:

1. Approval of the sign permit by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development.

Attachments:

1. Written descriptions and findings submitted by the applicant
2. Letters to Council Member Gordon and Prospect Park East River Road Improvement Association
3. Zoning map
4. Site Plan
5. Sign plan
6. Photos