



# CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Board of Adjustment

BOA Agenda Item #1  
March 20, 2014  
BZZ-6448

## LAND USE APPLICATION SUMMARY

**Property Location:** 1101 3<sup>rd</sup> Street South  
**Project Name:** Valspar VAST Building 4 - Signage  
**Prepared By:** [Shanna Sether](#), Senior City Planner, (612) 673-2307  
**Applicant:** HCM Architects  
**Project Contact:** Elizabeth Berres  
**Request:** To allow for a new wall sign.  
**Required Applications:**

<b>Variance</b>	To increase the maximum height of a wall sign from 28 feet to approximately 43 feet, 6 inches
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## SITE DATA

<b>Existing Zoning</b>	B4N Downtown Neighborhood District DP Downtown Parking Overlay District
<b>Lot Area</b>	113,865 square feet / 2.61 acres
<b>Ward(s)</b>	3
<b>Neighborhood(s)</b>	Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association
<b>Designated Future Land Use</b>	Mixed Use
<b>Land Use Features</b>	Not applicable
<b>Small Area Plan(s)</b>	<a href="#">Downtown East/North Loop Master Plan</a>

<b>Date Application Deemed Complete</b>	February 18, 2014	<b>Date Extension Letter Sent</b>	
<b>End of 60-Day Decision Period</b>	April 19, 2014	<b>End of 120-Day Decision Period</b>	

**BACKGROUND**

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT USE.** The subject property is one of four properties owned and operated by Valspar. Valspar is consolidating and expanding their North American Research and Test Lab capabilities into one campus to be named the Valspar Applied Science and Technology (VAST) Center. The subject property has been vacant for the last five years and was formerly used as the corporate headquarters for Valspar. The existing building is currently being renovated and will become the new research and development laboratory for Valspar. In addition, the subject property is in the process of seeking historic designation on the National Register of Historic Places. The renovation of the exterior included removal of the iconic paint on the exterior brick along the south side of the building; once the paint was removed two painted “ghost signs” were uncovered identifying the original tenant of the building – Minnesota Linseed Oil.

**SURROUNDING PROPERTIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD.** This property is one of four comprising the Valspar campus centered on the intersection of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street South. The property is immediately adjacent to the bike path and visible from the Green and Blue Line LRT and the future Minnesota Multi-Purpose Stadium.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION.** The applicant is proposing to add one wall sign, 43 feet 6 inches above grade to the primary building wall facing south. The maximum height of a wall sign in the B4N Downtown Neighborhood District is 28 feet. The applicant is proposing this location in order to preserve the existing “ghost signs” and to allow visibility of the newly renovated building.

**RELATED APPROVALS.** Use this section (paragraph and/or table) as-needed or delete.

Planning Case #	Application	Description	Action
BZZ-3396	Conditional use permit and variance to exceed the maximum allowable number of parking spaces in the Downtown Parking Overlay District from 113 to 130 spaces.	Expanded parking area	Withdrawn by applicant

**PUBLIC COMMENTS.** Staff has received letters of support from the Downtown Minneapolis Neighborhood Association and East Downtown Council. Copies of the letters are attached to the staff report. Any additional correspondence received prior to the public meeting will be forwarded on to the Board of Adjustment for consideration.

**ANALYSIS**

**VARIANCE**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application for a variance to increase the maximum sign height from 28 feet to approximately 43 feet 6 inches to allow for a new wall sign based on the following [findings](#):

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.*

Staff finds that there are practical difficulties in complying with the maximum sign height requirements due to circumstances that 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 2.6 acres and part of the larger Valspar campus. The proposed sign has been evaluated by the MN State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and found it to be within keeping with the existing historic 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 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 B4N Downtown Neighborhood District. The proposed signage would be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance at a height of approximately 43 feet 6 inches given the size and location of the structure and the existing “ghost signs”. 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. Locating the signs at a height of approximately 43 feet 6 inches allows for 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 sign copy will state “Valspar if it matters, we’re on it”. The proposed wall signs will be pinned to the wall and face-mounted and externally illuminated with goose neck lighting fixtures. The illumination from the signage will not front directly onto any property that would find the proposed sign overly imposing or intrusive. The subject property is currently being considered for designation on the National Register of Historic Places and SHPO has reviewed the proposed sign and found it to be in compliance with the sign guidelines. Therefore, granting the sign variance would not be detrimental to health, safety or welfare of the general public.

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 provided a master sign plan that includes the proposed signage for the structure. Four new signs were proposed and three were in compliance with the regulations found in Chapter 543 On-Premise Signs. The fourth sign exceeds the maximum sign height sign in the B4N District. In addition, the master sign plan has been reviewed and found to be in compliance by SHPO. Therefore, staff finds that the proposed sign adjustment located approximately 43 feet 6 inches above grade, 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 proposed sign copy will state “Valspar if it matters, we’re on it”.* The proposed wall sign will be metal, pinned to the wall and externally illuminated with goose neck lighting fixtures. Although staff is somewhat concerned about the fact that a portion of the sign would cover the uppermost sections of three of the third-story windows, the sign was evaluated by SHPO and found to be appropriate.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development for the Variance:**

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Board of Adjustment adopt the above findings and **approve** the application for a variance to increase the maximum sign height from 28 feet to approximately 43 feet 6 inches to allow for a new wall sign located at 1101 3<sup>rd</sup> Street South in the B4N Downtown Neighborhood District and DP Downtown Parking Overlay District, subject to the following condition:

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

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Written description and findings submitted by applicant
2. Zoning map
3. Site plan
4. Site survey
5. Sign plans
6. Building elevations
7. Renderings
8. Photos
9. Oblique aerials
10. Correspondence