

LAND USE APPLICATION SUMMARY

Property Location: 3121 Columbia Avenue (3310 California St NE)
Project Name: Viterra Sign
Prepared By: Mei-Ling Anderson, City Planner, (612) 673-5342
Applicant: Viterra US LLC
Project Contact: Monte Gunia
Request: To install a 10' by 23' wall sign.
Required Applications:

Conditional Use Permit	To increase the maximum permitted height of a wall sign from 28 feet to 150 feet in the I2 Medium Industrial District.
Variance	To exceed the maximum permitted sign area on a non-primary building wall from 0 to 230 square feet.
Variance	To allow a sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall.

SITE DATA

Existing Zoning	I2 Medium Industrial District
Lot Area	88,610 square feet / 2.03 acres
Ward(s)	I
Neighborhood(s)	Concerned Citizens of Marshall Terrace
Designated Future Land Use	Industrial
Land Use Features	Not applicable
Small Area Plan(s)	<u>Above the Falls Master Plan Update (2013)</u> ; <u>Industrial Land Use and Employment Policy Plan (2006)</u>

Date Application Deemed Complete	April 10, 2015	Date Extension Letter Sent	Not applicable
End of 60-Day Decision Period	June 9, 2015	End of 120-Day Decision Period	Not applicable

BACKGROUND

SITE DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT USE. The subject site is approximately 88,610 square feet in area. The property has an irregular, oblong shape, and is roughly 97 feet wide and 910 feet deep. The property is an interior through-lot that fronts both Columbia Avenue (west) and California Street NE (east), and is located to the north of three businesses that line 31st Avenue NE. The site is also adjacent to a vacant railroad spur. The site is currently used by Viterra, which is a business that specializes in grain handling. There are two main buildings on the site, including a warehouse and grain elevator, in addition to a series of storage tanks.

SURROUNDING PROPERTIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD. The site is located approximately 1,200 feet east of the Mississippi River. The surrounding area contains mostly light and medium industrial uses to the north, east, and west, and low-density residential uses to the south.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION. The applicant is requesting a conditional use permit and variances to allow a 10 foot by 23 foot sign on the south side of the property. The sign was installed three years ago and the applicant is now seeking zoning approvals for the height, area, and location. The sign would be visible from 31st Avenue NE and would face the south side of the property. It is a non-illuminated sign made of 1/8 inch thick aluminum painted sheets. It is attached to the grain elevator with bolts.

Table 543-4 of the zoning code provides sign standards for the Industrial Districts. The maximum height of a sign attached to a building is 28 feet. The applicant is seeking a conditional use permit to increase the maximum permitted height for an existing identification wall sign from 28 to 150 feet. As the primary building wall faces California Street NE and not the south property line, the request includes a variance to allow signage to be located on a non-primary building wall, as well as a variance to increase the exceed the maximum permitted sign area on a non-primary building wall from 0 square feet to 230 square feet.

PUBLIC COMMENTS. As of the printing of this report, staff has not received any correspondence from the community or from the neighborhood group. Any correspondence received prior to the public meeting will be forwarded on to the Planning Commission for consideration.

ANALYSIS

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application to increase the maximum permitted height of a wall sign from 28 feet to 150 feet in the I2 Medium Industrial District based on the following findings:

1. *The establishment, maintenance or operation of the conditional use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, comfort or general welfare.*

The applicant states that the sign was placed on the grain elevator at a height of 150 feet in order to orient vendors that travel from throughout North America to the site. The sign is attached to the top of an existing structure on the property and faces the south property line. The sign will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.

2. *Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, necessary facilities or other measures, have been or will be provided.*

The utilities, access, drainage, and other measures are existing and adequate. The addition of a wall signs will have no impact on these items.

3. *Adequate measures have been or will be taken to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.*

The site has adequate existing parking and traffic congestion in the public streets will not be impacted by the addition of a wall sign.

4. *The conditional use is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.*

The proposed development would be consistent with the following general land use policies of *The Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth*:

Urban Design Policy 10.12: Design industrial uses with appropriate transitions and other design features which minimize negative impacts on surrounding residential uses.

- 10.12.6 Use the site plan review process to ensure that lighting and signage associated with industrial uses do not create negative impacts for residential properties.

Urban Design Policy 10.20: Promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion caused by a proliferation of signage.

- 10.20.2 Master sign plans shall be submitted for multi-tenant buildings to ensure a complementary relationship between signage and the architecture of a building.
- 10.20.3 Develop incentives for exceptional sign design and style, including a special review process to ensure appropriate location, size, height and compatible design to the architecture of the building and other signage.
- 10.20.4 Develop a consistent, city-wide wayfinding signage design and maintenance plan for neighborhoods, trails, etc.

Urban Design Policy 10.21: Unique areas and neighborhoods within the city should have a special set of sign standards to allow for effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each area/neighborhood.

- 10.21.2 To promote street life and activity, signs should be located and sized to be viewed by people on foot (not vehicles) in order to preserve and encourage the pedestrian character of commercial areas that have traditional urban form.

Urban Design Policy 10.22 Use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when designing all projects that impact the public realm, including open spaces and parks, on publicly owned and private land.

- 10.22.7 Locate entrances, exits, signs, fencing, landscaping, and lighting to distinguish between public and private areas, control access, and to guide people coming to and going from the site.

The proposed sign is in conformance with these policies of the comprehensive plan.

5. *The conditional use shall, in all other respects, conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.*

If the requested land use applications are approved, the proposed sign will comply with all applicable provisions of I2 Medium Industrial District.

Additional Standards for Sign Adjustments

In addition to the conditional use permit standards, the Planning Commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when considering an adjustment to the number, type, height, area, or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown, or industrial district:

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 sign is the only one that is visible from 31st Avenue NE. Allowing the height of the wall sign to be 150 feet tall will not lead to sign clutter or be inconsistent with taller buildings located in an industrial district.

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 sign is made of 1/8 inch thick aluminum painted sheets and is secured to building with bolts. It is not internally or externally lit. The sign is not out of scale with the size or design of the building, site, or surrounding area.

VARIANCE

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application for a variance to exceed the maximum permitted sign area on a non-primary building wall from 0 square feet to 230 square feet, 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.*

The zoning ordinance does not allow signage on a non-primary building wall, but it permits a total allocation of 1.5 square feet for each linear foot of primary building wall if there is no other freestanding or roof sign on the same zoning lot. In this case, the primary building wall facing California Street NE is approximately 30 feet in length, so a total of 45 square feet of signage is allowed for the entire site and is limited to the primary building wall. The proposed sign faces the south property line and is not located on a primary building wall; the business's primary building wall faces California Street NE. Therefore, the property is allowed zero square feet of signage on its south side, and the applicant is proposing to retain a sign that is 10 feet tall and 23 feet wide, for a total of 230 square feet.

The property has an irregular, oblong shape, and is roughly 97 feet wide and 910 feet deep. The property is an interior through-lot that fronts both Columbia Avenue (west) and California Street NE (east), and is located to the north of three businesses that line 31st Avenue NE. The entrance to the site for visitors and staff is located on California Street NE, which is primarily accessible via 31st Avenue NE. The applicant states that visibility from 31st Avenue NE is important for visitors to navigate to their building entrance on California Street NE, which is a dead end. Staff has observed that, without a sign that complements the scale of the site and the buildings on the site, it would be difficult to identify the location of the business. The existing 32 square foot sign facing California Street NE would not provide sufficient identification for the site. Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance due to the property's oblong shape and orientation toward an isolated street.

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 a) allow effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each zoning district, b) promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion, and c) minimize adverse effects on nearby property and protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The subject property is zoned I2 Medium Industrial District. The applicant's request for a 230 square-foot identification sign is reasonable, as it matches the scale and character of the buildings on the site, and it would otherwise be difficult to locate the building from the public street. The proposed signage would be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance.

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 of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity. The immediate neighborhood is industrial and residential, and the street grid pattern is not consistent in this area. The sign would be affixed to an existing building and would complement the building's scale, color, and materials. The sign would not be illuminated and, therefore, it would not be overly imposing or intrusive on neighboring properties. Granting the sign variance would not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public.

Additional Standards for Sign Adjustments

In addition, the Planning Commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when considering an adjustment to the number, type, height, area, or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown, or industrial district:

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 only other sign on the site is next to the building entrance facing California Street NE. Viterra is the only business located on the property. The applicant is not proposing any additional signage at this time. Staff finds that the proposed 230 square foot sign located on the non-primary building wall would 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 sign would relate in size, shape, material, color, illumination, and character of the building on the property. The sign is made of 1/8-inch aluminum painted sheets and would be securely affixed to the industrial building to which it is attached. It would not be illuminated.

VARIANCE

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development has analyzed the application for a variance to allow a sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall 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.*

The zoning ordinance does not allow signage on a non-primary building wall, but it permits a total allocation of 1.5 square feet for each linear foot of primary building wall if there is no other freestanding or roof sign on the same zoning lot. In this case, the primary building wall facing California Street NE is approximately 30 feet in length, so a total of 45 square feet of signage is allowed for the entire site and is limited to the primary building wall. The proposed sign faces the south interior side lot line and is not located on a primary building wall; the business's primary building wall faces California Street NE. Therefore, the property is allowed zero square feet facing the south lot line, and the applicant is proposing a sign that is 10 feet tall and 23 feet wide, for a total of 230 square feet.

The property has an irregular, oblong shape, and is roughly 97 feet wide and 910 feet deep. The property is an interior through-lot that fronts both Columbia Avenue (west) and California Street NE (east), and is located to the north of three businesses that line 31st Avenue NE. The entrance to the site for visitors and staff is located on California Street NE, which is primarily accessible via 31st Avenue NE. The applicant states that visibility from 31st Avenue NE is important for visitors to navigate to their building entrance on California Street NE, which is a dead end. Staff has observed that the existing 32 square foot identification sign on the primary building wall facing California Street NE would not provide sufficient direction to visitors and vendors. Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance due to the property's oblong shape and orientation toward an isolated street.

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 a) allow effective signage appropriate to the planned character of each zoning district, b) promote an attractive environment by minimizing visual clutter and confusion, and c) minimize adverse effects on nearby property and protect the public health, safety, and welfare. The subject property is zoned I2 Medium Industrial District. The applicant's request to locate an attached sign on a non-primary building wall is reasonable, as it matches the scale and character of the buildings on the site, and it would otherwise be difficult to locate the building from the public street. The proposed signage would be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance.

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 of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity. The immediate neighborhood is industrial and residential, and the street grid pattern is not consistent in this area. The sign would be affixed to an existing building and would complement the building's scale, color, and materials. The sign would not be illuminated and, therefore, it would not be overly imposing or intrusive on neighboring properties. Granting the sign variance would not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public.

Additional Standards for Sign Adjustments

In addition, the Planning Commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when considering an adjustment to the number, type, height, area, or location of allowed signs on property located in an OR2 or OR3 District or a commercial, downtown, or industrial district:

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 only other sign on the site is next to the building entrance facing California Street NE. It is 4 feet by 8 feet (32 square feet). Viterra is the only business located on the property. The applicant is not proposing any additional signage at this time. Staff finds that the proposed 230 square foot sign located on the non-primary building wall would 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 sign would relate in size, shape, material, color, illumination, and character of the building on the property. The sign is made of 1/8-inch aluminum painted sheets and would be securely affixed to the industrial building to which it is attached. It would not be illuminated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt staff findings for the applications by Viterra US LLC for the property located at 3121 Columbia Avenue (3310 California Street NE):

A. Conditional Use Permit to increase the maximum permitted height of a wall sign in the I2 Medium Industrial District.

Recommended motion: **Approve** the application for a conditional use permit to increase the maximum permitted height of a wall sign from 28 feet to 150 feet in the I2 Medium Industrial District, subject to the following conditions:

1. The conditional use permit shall be recorded with Hennepin County as required by Minn. Stat. 462.3595, subd. 4 before building permits may be issued or before the use or activity requiring a conditional use permit may commence. Unless extended by the zoning administrator, the conditional use permit shall expire if it is not recorded within two years of approval.
2. All signage requires a separate permit from CPED.

B. Variance to exceed the maximum permitted sign area.

Recommended motion: **Approve** the variance application to exceed the maximum permitted sign area on a non-primary building wall from zero to 230 square feet.

C. Variance to allow a sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall.

Recommended motion: **Approve** the application for a variance to allow a sign to be placed on a non-primary building wall.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Written description and findings submitted by applicant
2. Zoning map
3. Site plan
4. Plans
5. Building elevations
6. Photos



Phone: 612-781-6871
Fax: 612-781-0107

Minneapolis Mustard Plant
3110 California Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418-1808

March 25-2015

Statement of use and description of sign

This letter is to inform you about the Viterra Sign on the top of the grain elevator at 3110 California Street. N.E. Minneapolis. California Street is a dead end street and it was causing misdirection of trucker and vendor routing scheduled truck traffic to the plant. The sign was necessary to provide high visibility to accommodate the flow of traffic into the plant. The plan for the sign was with input from vendors 3 years ago with the intended results to orient local traffic. Our intended purpose was to affect regulated flow of traffic which proved to be very successful in avoiding local congestion. We have had a number of city inspections over the passed years and this is the first comment about the sign we have received. The sign was placed 150' high on the grain elevator and is 10' high by 23' wide. The sign fits the building very nicely and provides high visibility. No negative comments were ever received here at the plant regarding the sign. The sign is made of 1/8 thick aluminum painted sheets secured to the building wall with bolts. The sign as no lighting to interfere with night time activities. If a reason be discovered that the sign creates a problem we gladly will work to make the sign more useful as to date it has become a prominent terrain feature for our many vendors. We are serviced by trucker from 10 continent state and 3 Canadian provinces so you see how many different driver we direct. We are looking forward to bring this matter to a satisfactory solution. Any questions or concerns please call Monte Gunia Plant Manage at 612 781-6871.

Sincerely,

Monte Gunia
Plant Manager



Phone: 612-781-6871
Fax: 612-781-0107

Minneapolis Mustard Plant
3110 California Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418-1808

March 25-2015

Conditional Use Permit

- 1: The sign will not and has not endangered or been detrimental to public health, safety, comfort or the general welfare of the public.
2. The sign will not and has not been injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding property.
3. The sign will not effect the utilities, access roads, drainage of the site.
4. Adequate measures have been taken to minimize traffic congestion. Will help local traffic congestion.
5. The conditional use permit for the sign is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.
6. The conditional use of the sign in all respects conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located.

Adjustments

1. The sign will not significantly increase or lead to sign clutter in the area.
2. The sign is designed for the building or property on which the sign is located.

Sincerely,

Monte Gunia
Plant Manager



Phone: 612-781-6871
Fax: 612-781-0107

Minneapolis Mustard Plant
3110 California Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418-1808

March 25-2015

Variance

1. The sign was in installed 3 years ago. It was placed designed and placed high on the building for high visibility.
2. The sign was installed on the property in a reasonable manner that will be in the keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance.
3. The proposed variance will not alter the character of the locality. Will not be a detriment to public health, safety and general welfare.

SIGN VARIANCE

1. The sign will not significantly increase or lead to sign clutter in the area.
2. The sign is designed for the building or property on which the sign is located.

Sincerely,

Monte Gunia
Plant Manager



Phone: 612-781-6871
Fax: 612-781-0107

Minneapolis Mustard Plant
3110 California Street NE
Minneapolis, MN 55418-1808

March 25-2015

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Sincerely,

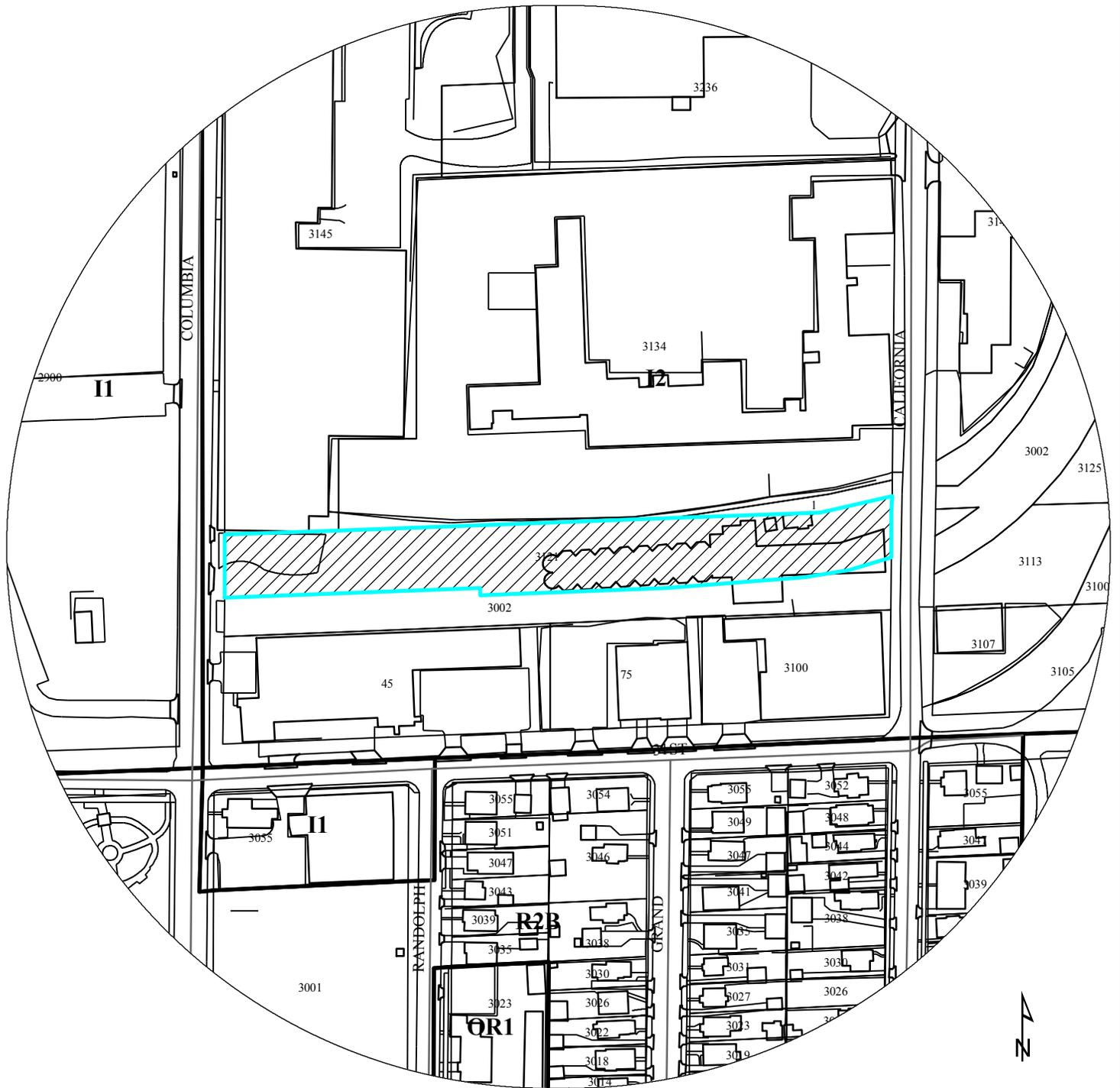
Monte Gunia
Plant Manager

Viterra Sign

1st

NAME OF APPLICANT

WARD

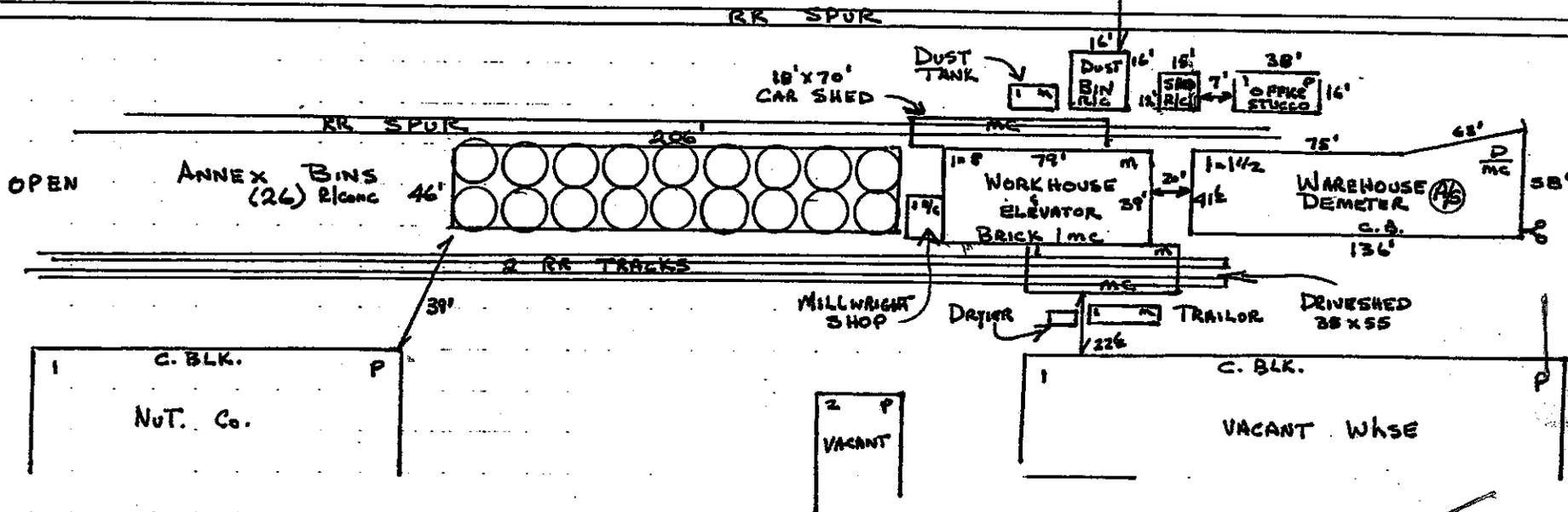
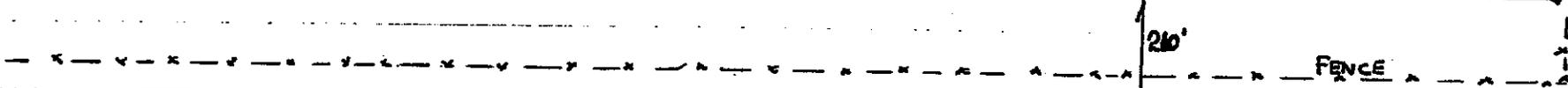
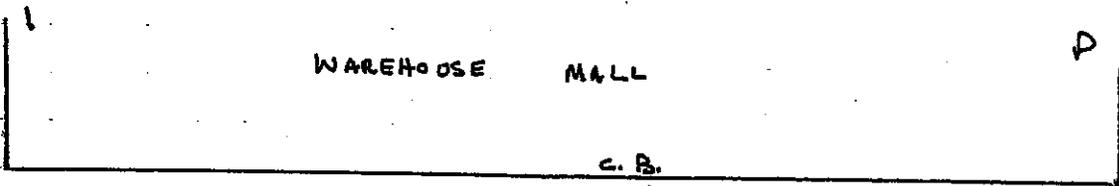


PROPERTY ADDRESS

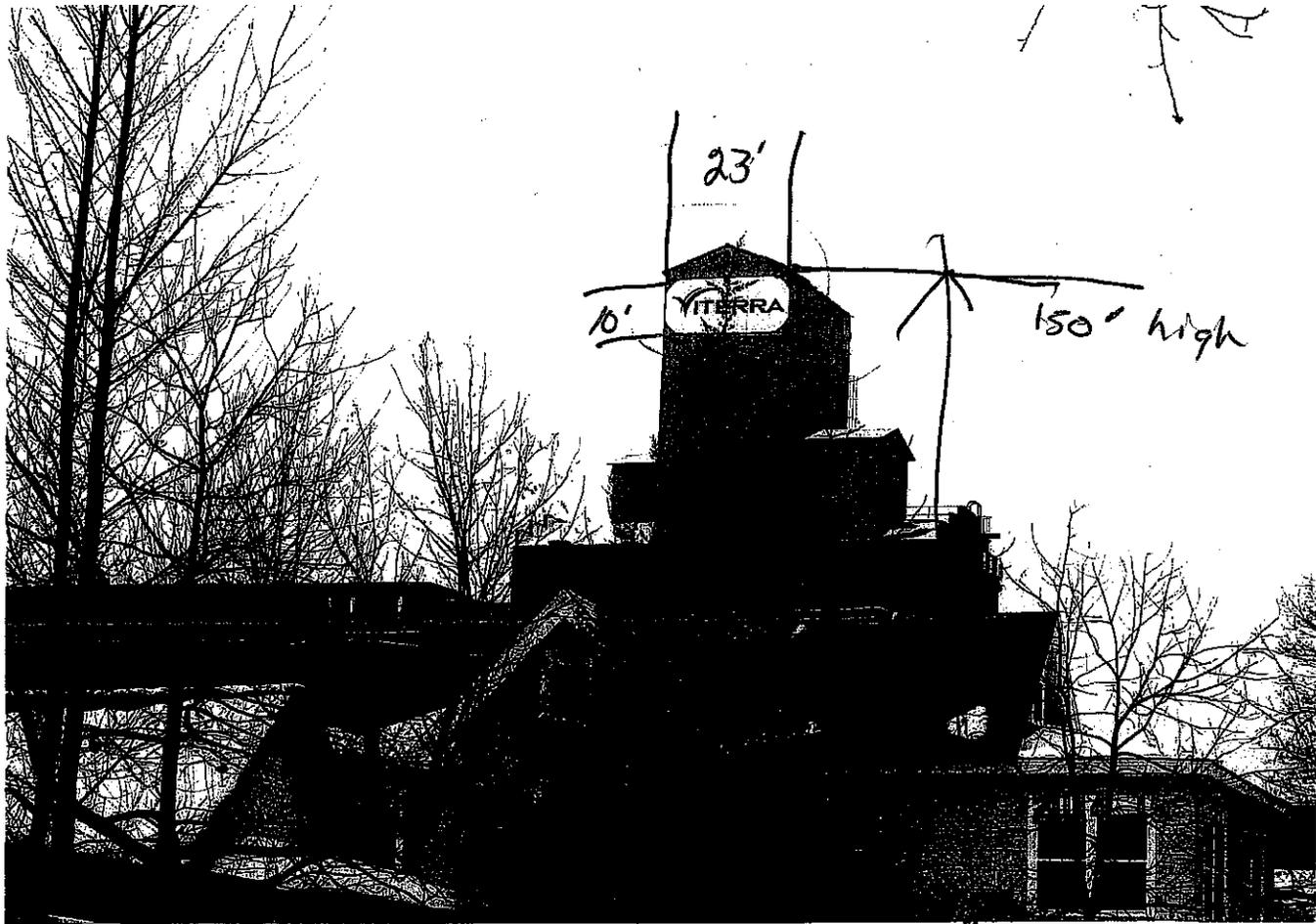
3121 Columbia Ave (3110 California St. NE)

FILE NUMBER

BZZ-7109



8" WATER MAIN



VITERRA





VITERRA

View from 31st Ave NE



View from 31st Ave NE



31st Ave NE/
California St NE
(southeast corner)



**California Street NE
(east view)**



**California Street NE
frontage (east view)**





**Columbia Ave
frontage (west view)**

St Anthony Pkwy

NE California St

NE 31st Ave

NE 31st Ave

Ave

St

N

Mississippi
Flowage

23

