



## CPED STAFF REPORT

Prepared for the Zoning Board of Adjustment  
BOA Agenda Item #2  
November 19, 2015  
BZZ-7479

### LAND USE APPLICATION SUMMARY

*Property Location:* 1501 LaSalle Avenue  
*Project Name:* The Parkway Apartments Signage  
*Prepared By:* [Janelle Widmeier](#), Senior City Planner, (612) 673-3156  
*Applicant:* Parkway Property Investors LLC  
*Project Contact:* Carol Lansing, Faegre Baker Daniels LLP  
*Request:* To install two wall signs.  
*Required Applications:*

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| <b>Variance</b> | To increase the maximum allowed height of two wall signs from 14 feet to 33.2 feet. |
|-----------------|---|

### SITE DATA

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Existing Zoning</b>            | OR3 Institutional Office Residence District<br>DP Downtown Parking Overlay District |
| <b>Lot Area</b>                   | 8,712 square feet   |
| <b>Ward(s)</b>                    | 7   |
| <b>Neighborhood(s)</b>            | Citizens for a Loring Park Community  |
| <b>Designated Future Land Use</b> | Urban Neighborhood  |
| <b>Land Use Features</b>          | Growth Center (Downtown)  |
| <b>Small Area Plan(s)</b>         | <a href="#">Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan (2013)</a>                         |

|   |                   |                                       |                |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Date Application Deemed Complete</b> | October 21, 2015  | <b>Date Extension Letter Sent</b>     | Not applicable |
| <b>End of 60-Day Decision Period</b>    | December 20, 2015 | <b>End of 120-Day Decision Period</b> | Not applicable |

## BACKGROUND

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT USE.** A 7-level brick building is located on the subject property. The first 4 levels of the building were permitted for construction in 1918. The top 3 levels were permitted for construction in 1921. The building was originally used as a hotel. There are currently 70 apartments in the building. Some commercial uses are also located on the first level. The main entrance faces LaSalle Avenue.

**SURROUNDING PROPERTIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD.** There is a mix of uses in the immediate area, including office, high-density residential, food and beverage, and retail uses.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION.** The applicant is proposing to install two 45.5 square foot wall signs on the corner of the building adjacent to the LaSalle Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street West intersection. The top of the signs would be located 33.2 feet above the adjacent grade. In the OR3 District, the maximum allowed height is 14 feet. A variance is required to increase the maximum allowed sign height. The sign proposal would comply with all other applicable zoning code requirements.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS.** As of writing this report, no correspondence from the neighborhood group has been received. Any 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 allowed height of two wall signs from 14 feet to 33.2 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.*

Both street facing facades of the building are primary building walls. The OR3 district allows 1.5 square feet of signage for every one foot of primary building wall, but does not allow signage to be located more than 14 feet above the adjacent grade. On the 15<sup>th</sup> Street wall, approximately 99 square feet of signage is allowed. On the LaSalle Avenue wall, approximately 178 square feet of signage is allowed. The applicant is proposing to locate two 45.5 square foot signs 33.2 feet above the adjacent grade.

Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance due to circumstances unique to the property. Although a large amount of signage is allowed, there are limited options where signage can be located. Much of the façade is windows. There is also a horizontal band of stone approximately 9 feet above the adjacent grade. The banding projects a couple of inches from the brick facade to cap the base of the building. To prevent covering up existing windows and to be compatible with the architectural character of the building, the applicant is requesting to locate a sign higher than 14 feet above grade. The applicant would like the top of the signs to be located at 33.2 feet. They have indicated views of the signs at a lower location would be obscured by the adjacent traffic signal. However, CPED staff did not observe that the traffic signal would significantly obscure visibility from multiple vantage points. The site is close to the downtown core. In the downtown zoning districts, the maximum sign height is 28 feet. The top of the third level windows

are also located at approximately 28 feet. To ensure that the height is consistent with the intent of the ordinance, staff is recommending that the height be limited to 28 feet.

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.*

Regulations governing on-premise signs are 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 OR3 Institutional Office Residence District is established to provide a mixed use environment of very high density dwellings, large office uses, and major institutions, with additional small scale retail sales and services uses designed to serve the immediate surroundings. This district may serve freestanding institutions and employment centers or as a transition between downtown and surrounding moderate to low density residential neighborhoods.

To prevent covering up existing windows and to be compatible with the architectural character of the building, the applicant is requesting to locate a sign higher than 14 feet above grade. The proposed amount of signage is far less than what could be installed. Provided the height does not exceed 28 feet for the reasons listed above, the request is reasonable and in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and comprehensive plan.

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.*

If the height is limited to 28 feet, granting the variance would not negatively alter the character of the area and would not be detrimental to the health, safety, or welfare of the general public or of those utilizing the property or nearby properties. There is a mix of uses in the immediate area. At 28 feet, the sign height would still be appropriate for a pedestrian environment. The applicant also located a historic photo, which shows a projecting sign located above a 14 foot height (see the right side of the attached photo). To ensure minimal impact on the building, the signs should be attached to the building through the mortar joints.

### **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 OR3 Institutional Office Residence District is established to provide a mixed use environment of very high density dwellings, large office uses, and major institutions, with additional small scale retail sales and services uses designed to serve the immediate surroundings. This district may serve freestanding institutions and employment centers or as a transition between downtown and surrounding moderate to low density residential neighborhoods.

In addition to the two proposed signs, there are two 7.5 square foot leasing signs below the proposed sign locations. There are also several small windows signs for the garden level commercial tenants. The total amount of signage proposed is well below what is allowed. Placing the identification wall signs at 28 feet would be compatible with the architectural character of the building and would be appropriate for a pedestrian environment. However, locating four wall signs at the corner of the building would result in sign clutter. CPED staff is recommending that not more than two signs be located at the corner of the building and that signs located on the same

building wall are placed at least 30 feet apart. Provided the height does not exceed 28 feet for the reasons listed above and the leasing signs are removed or relocated, the request would not lead to sign clutter in the area or result in signs that are inconsistent with the OR3 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 primary exterior material of the high-density building is brick. In the first 14 feet of the building, much of the façade is also windows. There is also a horizontal band of stone approximately 9 feet above the adjacent grade. The banding projects a couple of inches from the brick facade to cap the base of the building. To prevent covering up existing windows and to be compatible with the architectural character of the building, the applicant is requesting to locate a sign higher than 14 feet above grade. Each sign would be 3 feet wide and 15 feet tall and would consist of a routed aluminum face with white LED, internally illuminated letters. Increasing the allowed height would result in signs that relate in size, shape, material, color, illumination and character of the building and the use.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Zoning Board of Adjustment adopt staff findings for the application by Parkway Property Investors LLC for the property located at 1501 LaSalle Avenue:

### A. Variance to increase the maximum allowed sign height.

Recommended motion: **Approve** the variance to increase the maximum allowed height of two wall signs from 14 feet to 28 feet, subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval of the sign permit by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development.
2. To prevent sign clutter, not more than two wall signs shall be located at the corner of the building adjacent to the LaSalle Avenue and 15<sup>th</sup> Street West intersection. Other signs located on the same wall as a corner sign shall be separated by at least 30 feet.
3. To ensure minimal impact on the building, the signs shall be attached to the building through the mortar joints.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Written description and findings submitted by applicant
2. Zoning map
3. Site plan
4. Sign plans
5. Renderings
6. Photos

**THE PARKWAY APARTMENTS**  
**1501 LASALLE AVENUE SOUTH**

**SIGN VARIANCE STATEMENT**

October 16, 2015

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Parkway is a 70-unit apartment building constructed in 1919 and located at 1501 LaSalle Avenue in an area identified in the Loring Park Neighborhood Master Plan (the “LPN Master Plan”) as the Apartment District. The Apartment District is an area consisting of apartments and hotel apartments built for middle class urbanites in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Although not a designated historic district, the Master Plan encourages enhancement of the historic character and unique architecture of this and other historic areas and structures within the neighborhood. The proposed signs are reminiscent of the historic signage for The Parkway, both in design and location. Like the historic signage, the proposed signs have vertical white lettering on a black background and are of similar proportions, though lower in height and wall mounted, rather than projecting.

Two identical wall signs are proposed, one to be located on the 15<sup>th</sup> Street facade of the building and the other on the LaSalle facade, both near the corner of the building at the intersection of those streets. The proposed signs will have a routed aluminum face and the white “The PARKWAY” letters will be internally illuminated with LED. The proposed placement is intended to make the signs most visible to both pedestrians and vehicles heading southbound on one-way LaSalle and in either direction on 15<sup>th</sup> Street. The signs will be 45.5 SF in area, well below the 180-SF maximum area allowed for signs in the OR3 District. The only other signs on the building are two, 7.5 SF “Apartment Available” information wall signs and very small window signs for commercial uses in the garden level commercial spaces. Based on the length of the building facades, approximately 99 SF of signage is allowed on the 15<sup>th</sup> Street facade and approximately 297 SF of signage is allowed on the LaSalle frontage. The total signage on each facade with the addition of the proposed signs will remain well below the total signage allowed per facade.

Both signs require a variance to allow the top of the sign height to be 33.17 feet, above the 14-foot limit of the OR3 District. The proposed location and height of the signs is necessary to make them visible above the traffic signal at the corner and proportional to the height and mass of the building. The proposed height is also more consistent with the historic location of corner signage for The Parkway.

## VARIANCE 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.*

Practical difficulties exist in complying with the ordinance. In order to be complementary to the existing building design, signs should be located above the horizontal course of brick that forms the architectural base of the building. This base course is approximately 10 feet high at the corner, leaving only 4 feet of length for a sign that would comply with the 14-foot height limit of the OR3 District. A small sign no higher than 14 feet would be disproportional for this 7-story, rectangular-massed building. A traffic signal would also obscure the view of a lower sign on the 15<sup>th</sup> Street facade. A vintage photo of the building looking north on LaSalle shows a historic “Parkway” sign projecting from the building corner. The historic sign was placed much higher than 14 feet. These circumstances are unique to the property and were not created by the applicant.

*(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 proposed signs are reasonable and in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and comprehensive plan. The 45.5 SF signs are much smaller than the 180 SF maximum area allowed for wall signs in the OR3 District. The total signage on each facade will also be well below the allowed maximum. The design, shape and proposed height of the signs are similar to the historic building signage and are complementary to the historic architecture.

The site guided Mixed Use on the future land use map adopted as part of The LPN Master Plan in 2013. The site is one-half block from the Loring Village Activity Center and one block from the Nicollet Avenue commercial Corridor. The comprehensive plan includes the following guidance specifically related to signs and relevant to this proposal.

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

**Comment:** Currently there is no identification signage for The Parkway on the building. With the addition of the proposed signs, there will still be a relatively small amount of signage overall. The proposed sign height reduces visual clutter in context of the architectural elements of the building. Each sign will be visible from different directions.

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.

**Comment:** Although higher than 14 feet, the signs remain oriented to the pedestrian realm. They will be oriented toward the more heavily travelled and mixed use character areas along 15<sup>th</sup> Street and north toward LaSalle, and away from the quieter residential character area south on LaSalle. The height of the proposed signs is reasonable based on the scale of the building.

10.21.3 Encourage effective signage that is appropriate to the character of the city's historic districts and landmarks, and preserves the integrity of historic structures.

**Comment:** The location and height of the signs are in character with the historic urban forms of this building and neighborhood when originally constructed.

*(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.*

As noted above, the proposed signs are reminiscent in design, location and height to the historic sign for the building. The proposed 33.17-foot height will not be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property. They will not be detrimental to public health or safety because they will comply with all lighting, building code and sign permitting regulations.

#### **SIGN ADJUSTMENT CRITERIA**

*(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.*

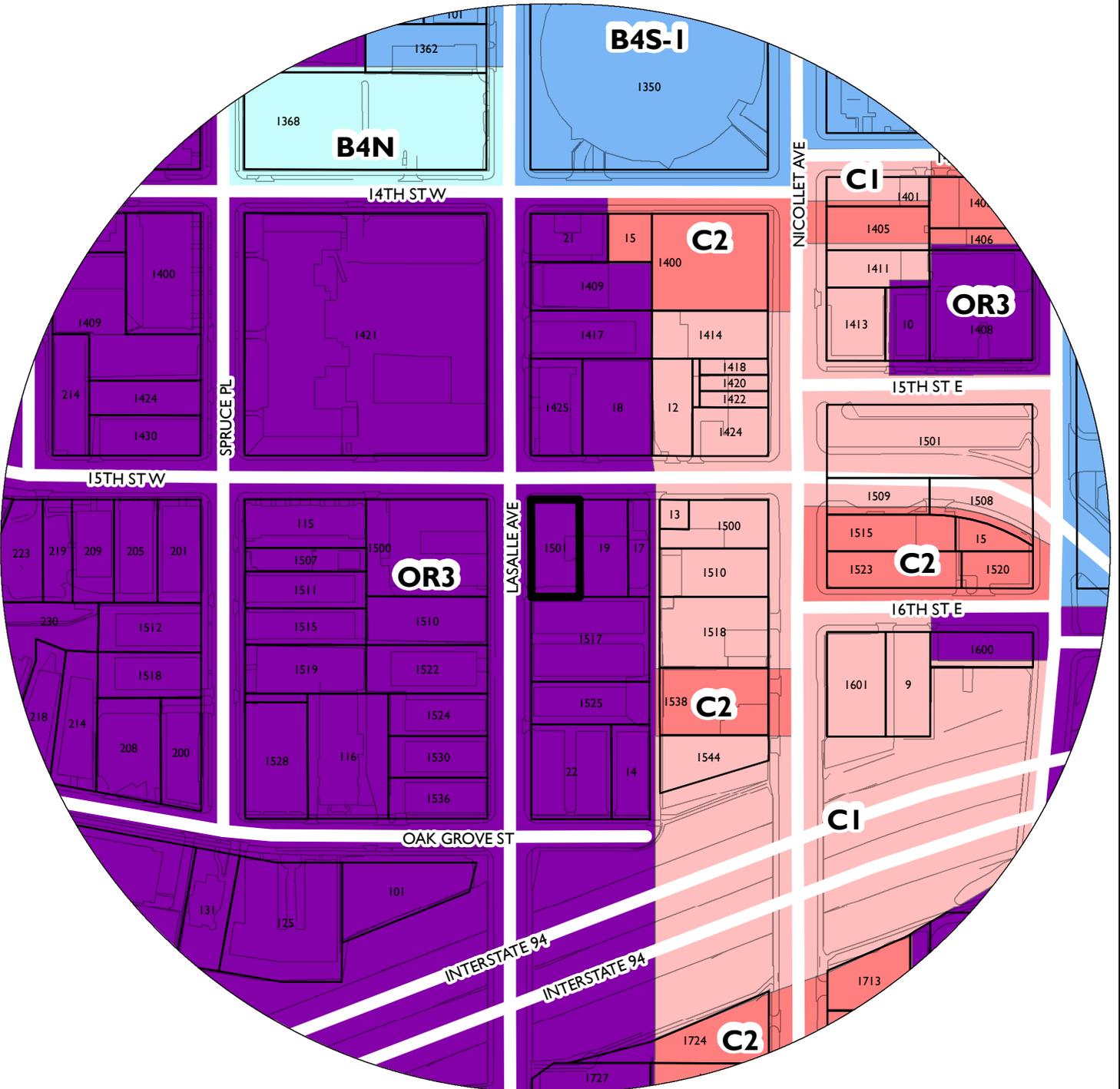
As noted above, there currently are no building identification signs. The only other signs on the building are small "Apartment Available" wall signs. Other than the request for increased height, the signs comply with all other sign dimension requirements for the zoning district. Signs identifying the name of a large apartment building are consistent with the purpose of the OR3 zoning district, which provides a mixed use environment of very high density dwellings, large office uses, and major institutions.

*(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.*

As also noted above, the size, shape, colors, location and height of the proposed signs are in scale with the building, complementary to the architectural design and similar to the historic signage for the building. The signs will be professionally installed with quality materials.

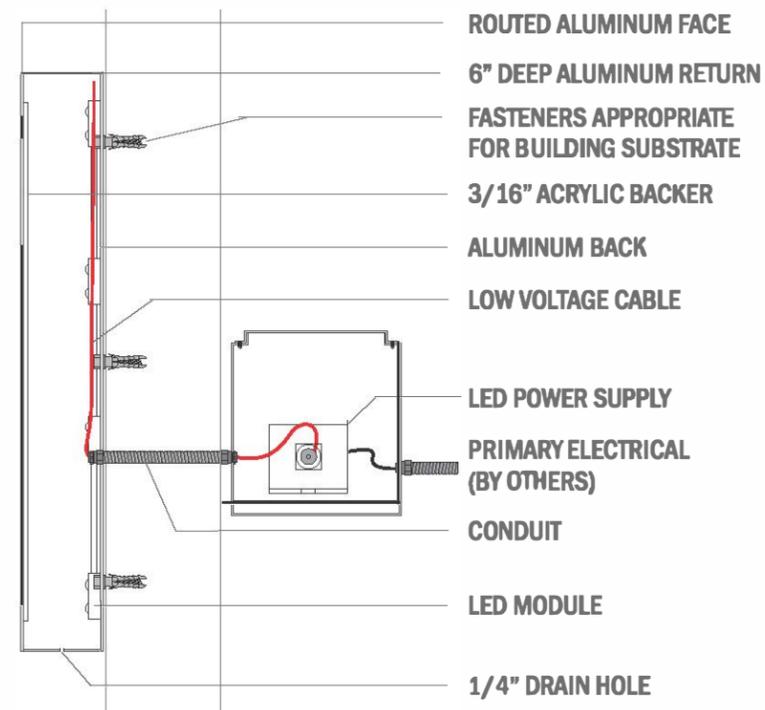
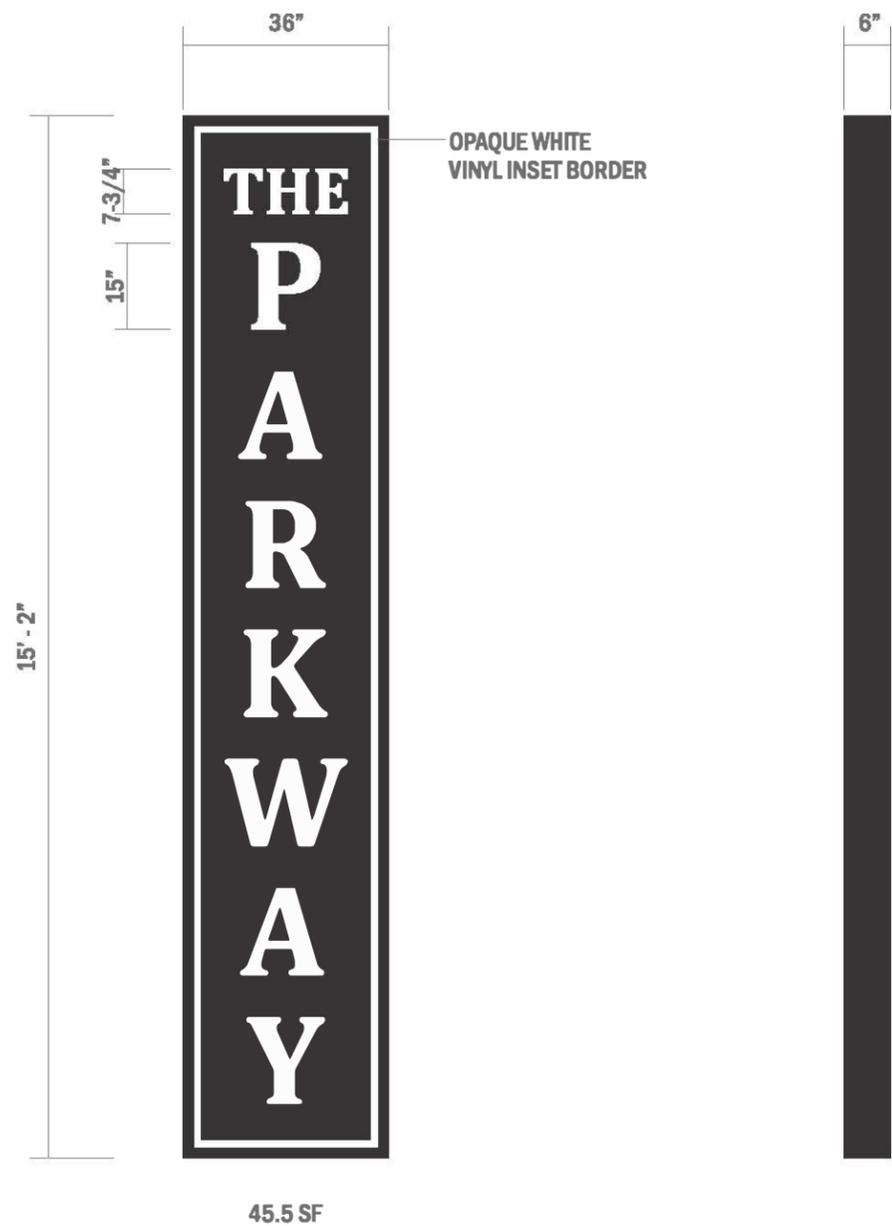
NAME OF APPLICANT

WARD



PROPERTY ADDRESS  
**1501 LaSalle Ave**

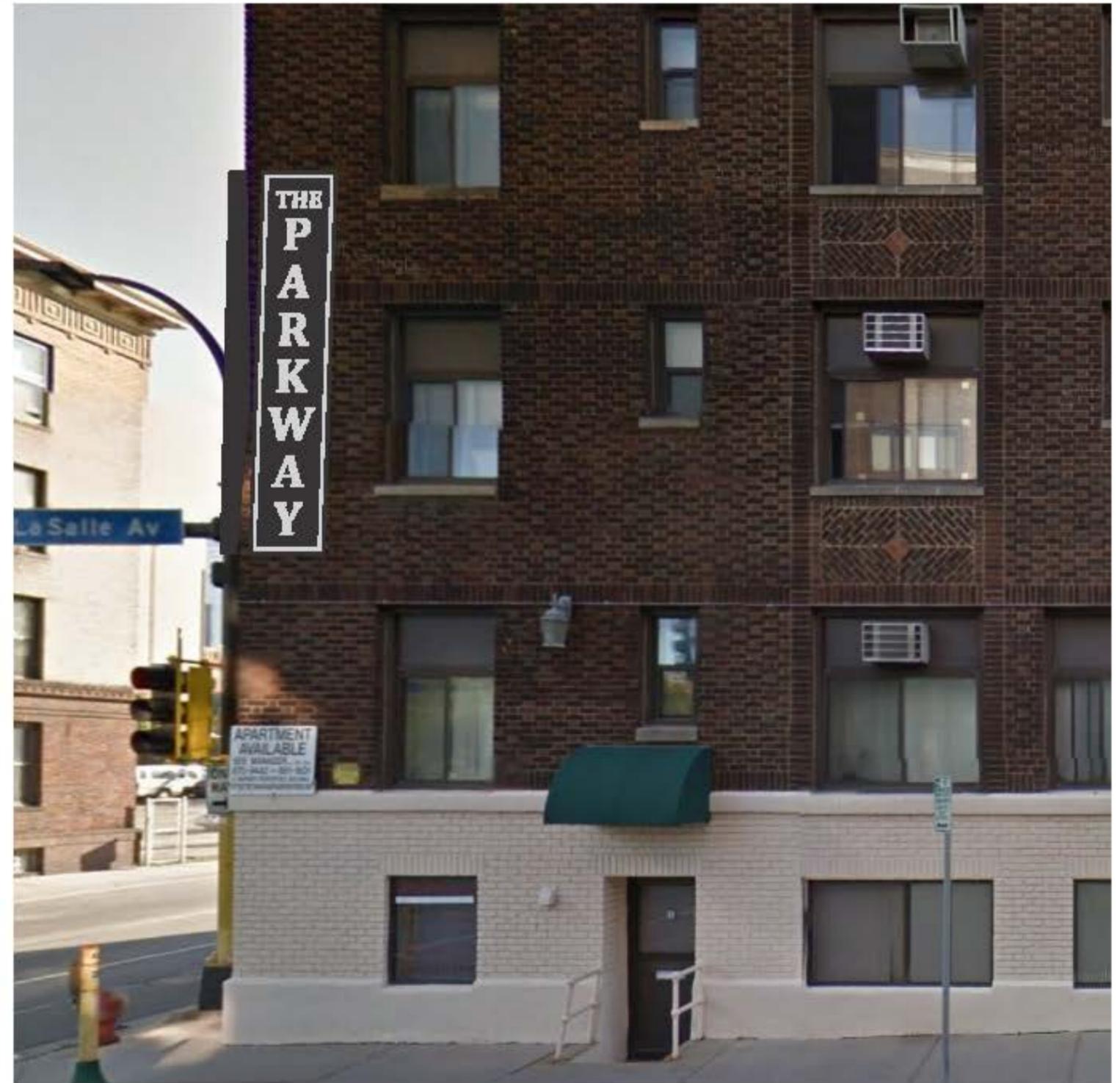
FILE NUMBER  
**BZZ-7479**



2 ILLUMINATED WALL SIGN: 1/8" ALUMINUM FACE, ROUTED COPY OVER 1" SQUARE TUBE INTERNAL FRAME WITH 3/16" ACRYLIC BACKER. WHITE LED ILLUMINATION.  
1 SCALE: 3/8" = 1' - 0"



NORTH: 68'-0" WIDE



WEST: 120'-0"

**1** PROPOSED CONDITIONS: NORTH & WEST ELEVATIONS  
**1** SCALE: 3/16" = 1'-0"

**LANDMARK**  
 Architectural Signs

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**PROJECT**

CPM MANAGEMENT - THE PARKWAY  
 1501 LABALLE AVE  
 MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55403

**SALES: JC DESIGN: MW**

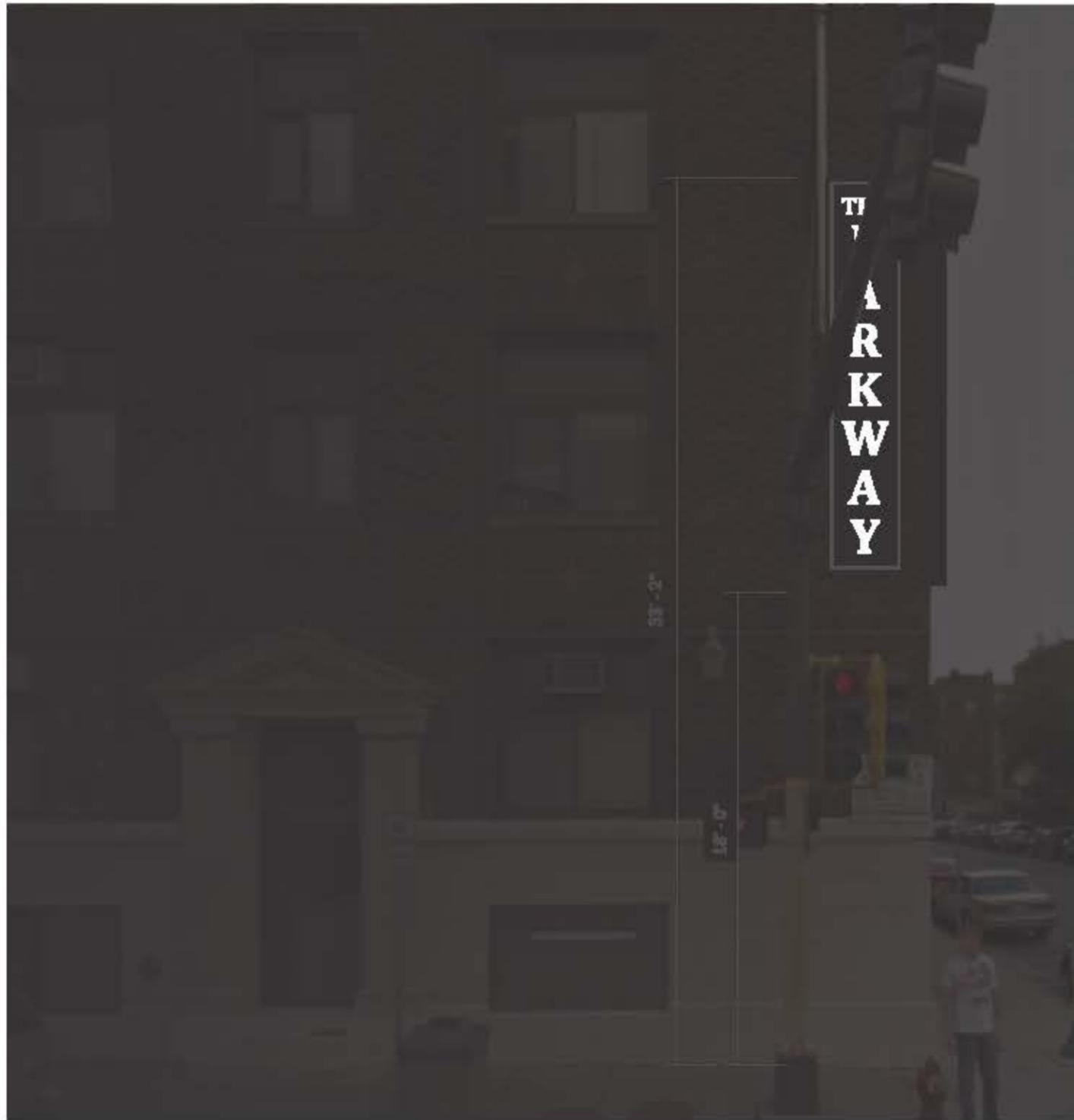
DATE: 09.29.15  
 REV:  
 REV:

**SIGNTYPE**

INTERIOR ILLUMINATED  
 WALL SIGN WITH ROUTED  
 COPY



3 ILLUMINATED WALL SIGN: LONG DISTANCE VIEWS  
1 NOT TO SCALE



NORTH: 65'-0" WIDE

WEST: 120'-0"

4  
1 SIMULATED NIGHT VIEW: NORTH & WEST ELEVATIONS  
SCALE: 3/16" = 1' - 0"

**LANDMARK**  
Architectural Signs

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**PROJECT**

CPM MANAGEMENT - THE PARKWAY  
1501 CASALLE AVE  
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55409

SALES: JC DESIGN: MW

DATE: 09.29.15  
REV:  
REV:

**SIGN TYPE**

INTERIOR ILLUMINATED  
WALL SIGN WITH ROUTED  
COPY

