

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Variance
BZZ-2459

Date: August 15, 2005

Applicant: North Central University

Address of Property: 825 14th Street East

Project Name: North Central University

Contact Person and Phone: Jan Gill with Dennis Batty & Associates, (763) 560-6814

Planning Staff and Phone: Hilary Watson, (612) 673-2639

Date Application Deemed Complete: July 20, 2005

End of 60-Day Decision Period: September 18, 2005

End of 120-Day Decision Period: Not applicable

Ward: 7 Neighborhood Organization: Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.

Existing Zoning: OR3, Institutional Office Residence District and DP Downtown Parking Overlay District

Proposed Zoning: Not applicable for this application

Zoning Plate Number: 20

Legal Description: Not applicable for this application

Proposed Use: Sign for a university chapel addition

Concurrent Review:

Variance: to increase the height of a wall sign from the maximum 14 feet to 24 feet.

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 525, Article IX, Variances, specifically Section 525.520(21) “to vary 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, pursuant to Chapter 543, On-Premise Signs”.

Background: North Central University is in the process of constructing an addition to the existing chapel. The Planning Commission granted a conditional use permit and variances (BZZ-2038) for the chapel on November 8, 2004. The chapel is used for daily chapel service, classes and seasonal concerts

and plays. The chapel is being named after an alumni of the university; Rev. Thomas Trask. The sign, which will be located over the entrance to the building, will read: TRASK WORSHIP CENTER. The height of a wall sign in the OR3 zoning district is subject to a 14-foot height limit. The proposed sign would be located 24 feet above the ground.

VARIANCE - to increase the height of a wall sign from the maximum 14 feet to 24 feet

Findings as Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for the Variance:

1. The property cannot be put to a reasonable use under the conditions allowed and strict adherence to the regulations of this zoning ordinance would cause undue hardship.

Increased height of a wall sign: The applicant is seeking a variance to increase the height of a wall sign from the maximum 14 feet to 24 feet. The applicant has indicated that the site which the chapel is located on is just over one acre in size. In addition, the applicant has indicated that the entrance to the building is two stories tall and therefore the top of the sign band above the entrance is located 24 feet off of the ground. The lettering of the sign itself will be recessed into a precast concrete block which will have the appearance of limestone.

2. The circumstances are unique to the parcel of land for which the variance is sought and have not been created by any persons presently having an interest in the property. Economic considerations alone shall not constitute an undue hardship if reasonable use for the property exists under the terms of the ordinance.

Increased height of a wall sign: The fact that the development is located on a site over one acre in size is a unique circumstance.

3. The granting of the variance will be in keeping with the spirit and intent of the ordinance and will not alter the essential character of the locality or be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the vicinity.

Increased height of a wall sign: The granting of the variance will not significantly affect the essential character of the area. The lettering of the sign will be recessed into the block of precast concrete and will have the appearance of limestone. In addition, the sign faces Elliot Avenue South which in this area of the City has been vacated.

4. The proposed variance will not substantially increase the congestion of the public streets, or increase the danger of fire, or be detrimental to the public welfare or endanger the public safety.

Increased height of a wall sign: Staff believes that the granting of the variance would likely have little impact on congestion of area streets or fire safety, nor would the height of the sign be detrimental to welfare or public safety.

SIGN ADJUSTMENT

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for the Proposed 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.

It is in the Planning Division's opinion that the proposed sign is consistent with the purpose of the zoning district and does not lead to sign clutter. The proposed sign is the only sign on the east wall of the building which is approximately 249 feet in length.

2. The sign adjustment will allow a sign of exceptional design or style that will enhance the area or that is more consistent with the architecture and design of the site.

The lettering of the sign itself will be recessed into a precast concrete block which will have the appearance of limestone. The style of the sign is consistent with the architecture of the building and is characteristic of other university buildings on the campus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the variance:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the findings above and **approve** the variance to increase the height of a wall sign from the maximum 14 feet to 24 feet for the property located at 825 14th Street East

Attachments:

1. Letter from property owner
2. Statement of proposed use and description of the project
3. Variance findings
4. June 30, 2005, letters to CM Goodman and Elliot Park Neighborhood, Inc.
5. Zoning Map
6. Site plan and elevations
7. Photographs of the site and the surrounding area