

Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division
Conditional Use Permit and Variance
BZZ-2585

Date: October 5, 2005

Applicant: Signia Design

Address of Property: 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast

Project Name: University of Minnesota Medical Center-Fairview U of M Campus

Contact Person and Phone: Frank Hickey, (651) 209-6254

Planning Staff and Phone: Lonnie Nichols, (612) 673-5468

Date Application Deemed Complete: August 23, 2005

End of 60-Day Decision Period: October 22, 2005

End of 120-Day Decision Period: Not applicable at this time

Ward: 2 **Neighborhood Organization:** Marcy Holmes

Existing Zoning: OR3 (Institutional Office Residence District)

Proposed Zoning: No zoning change proposed, not applicable for this application.

Zoning Plate Number: 22

Legal Description: No zoning change proposed, not applicable for this application.

Proposed Use: Signage changes for existing Medical Building and campus grounds.

Concurrent Review: Conditional use permit, as regulated by section 525.340, to replace an existing sign in a location greater than six stories in height to allow a non-illuminated logo wall sign on an existing building located above six stories, as governed by section 543.340(b). Variance to exceed the maximum square footage of signage allowed by section 525.520 (21).

Applicable zoning code provisions: Chapter 521, Zoning Districts and Maps; Chapter 525, Article VII, Conditional Use Permits; Chapter 525, Article IX Variances; Chapter 543, On-premise Signs.

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ-2585

Background: The applicant has proposed replacement signage to reflect a corporate name change from Fairview-University Medical Center to University of Minnesota Medical Center–Fairview. The overall dimension (sq. ft. area) of the wall signage would be reduced on the building at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast, but still requires a conditional use permit and variance application. The freestanding ground signage at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast would also be reduced in size, but would increase in height and coverage area due to the proposed masonry base and signature wall. The applicant has provided a site plan that identifies the University of Minnesota medical campus parcel and supporting diagrams and elevations for the building and freestanding signage.

Summary for the building at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast:

Site 1: There is currently 468 sf of illuminated wall signage, including a logo, located at the top of the North façade of the building. Implementation of the proposal would remove the existing signage and logo and replace it with 405 sf of illuminated (L.E.D.) wall signage, including a smaller logo.

Summary for the ground signage at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast:

Site 2: There is currently a two-sided ground sign of 192 sf per side of approximately 16 ft width and 10 ft height. Implementation of the proposal would remove the existing signage and replace it with a two-sided ground sign of 182 sf per side of 12 ft width and 16 ft height (11 ft of signage on a 5 ft tall base). In addition, a 139 sf masonry surfaced signature wall (5 ft 3 inch height by 26 ft 5 inch length) which may have 34 sf of lettering (2 institutional titles at 17 sf each) would be added. An unspecified amount of landscaping would be removed

Previous actions taken by the city for signage at this University of Minnesota medical campus address were not supplied by the Archives Department. Staff will check into previous actions further prior to the public hearing. The zoning administrator has determined the site would be deemed to have a CUP for the existing wall and free standing signage under review.

For the building at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast, the proposed signage revision would require a conditional use permit and variance under section 543.340, which contains special provisions for wall signs located on large buildings:

543.340. Wall signs. (a) *In general.* A wall sign shall not extend outward more than twenty-four (24) inches from the structure, except a flat wall sign shall not extend outward more than six (6) inches from the structure. A wall sign shall not extend above the top of the wall or parapet line or, in the case of a mansard roof, beyond the deck line, nor shall a wall sign extend beyond the corner of the building.

(b) *Exception.* Recognizing that certain larger uses may have unique identification needs, notwithstanding the height and area limits of Tables 543-2, Specific Standards for Signs in the OR2, OR3 and Commercial Districts, 543-3, Specific Standards for Signs in the Downtown Districts, and 543-4, Specific Standards for Signs in the Industrial Districts, a conditional use permit may be applied for, as provided in Chapter 525, Administration and Enforcement, to allow not more than two (2) additional wall signs identifying the name or logo of a use that exceeds six (6) stories or eighty-four (84) feet in height, subject to the following:

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ 2585

- (1) Signs shall be limited to individual letters or elements permanently affixed to the building wall.
- (2) Signs shall not exceed three (3) square feet of sign area for each one (1) foot of building wall to which such sign is attached or three hundred (300) square feet, whichever is less.
- (3) Not more than one (1) sign shall be located on a building wall.
- (4) The vertical dimension of such sign shall not exceed fourteen (14) feet.

In addition to applying for the conditional use permit noted in the above provision, the applicant is applying for a variance from the three hundred (300) square feet dimension limitation stated in standard number two (2) above for the signage listed for the North façade of the medical building.

As per Table 543-2 Specific Standards for signs in the OR2, OR3, and Commercial Districts, the applicant would also be limited to one (1) freestanding sign per zoning lot, 32 sq. ft. per sign, and a maximum sign height of eight (8) feet. The freestanding ground signage at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast would require a variance for size (sq. ft. above 32 sq. ft. maximum allowed) and height (height above 8 ft.). In addition, a variance to allow more than one (1) freestanding sign per zoning lot would be required assuming the plan would include lettering on the signature wall.

If the signature wall is considered to be a fence or retaining wall instead of a second freestanding sign at sites 3, 4, and 5, the structure would be subject to section 543.220 of the code listed below.

543.220. Fence signs. (a) In general. Signs attached to fences shall be included in the calculation of maximum wall sign area allowed on a site and shall be regulated as such. Signs attached to fences shall not project beyond the edge of the fence.

(b) In required yards. Signs attached to fences, retaining walls or other similar structures may be located within a required yard, provided such sign, including the back of such sign, shall not be visible from any residence or office residence district abutting such required yard.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT:

Findings As Required By The Minneapolis Zoning Code for signage above six (6) stories:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development - Planning Division has analyzed the application and from the findings above concludes that the establishment, maintenance, or operation of the proposed sign:

- 1. Will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare.**

The sign would replace an existing sign that is larger in area. As far as staff is aware, the existing sign has not been detrimental to the surrounding area. The sign would have no moving or flashing components that would be particularly distracting to drivers or nearby neighbors.

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ-2585

- 2. Will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the vicinity and will not impede the normal or orderly development and improvement of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.**

The sign would not front directly onto any property that would find the proposed sign overly imposing or intrusive.

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

The site is adequately serviced by existing infrastructure. Changing the sign would not affect the use of or need for such infrastructure.

- 4. Adequate measures have been or will be provided to minimize traffic congestion in the public streets.**

The sign would replace an existing sign of approximately the same size. Staff does not anticipate that the sign change would induce a greater amount of traffic congestion.

- 5. Is consistent with the applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.**

Staff has identified the following policies of the Minneapolis Plan as being relevant to the conditional use permit application:

Relevant policy: **9.23** Minneapolis will continue to provide a wide range of goods and services for city residents, to promote employment opportunities, to encourage the use and adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings, and to maintain and improve compatibility with surrounding areas.

Relevant Implementation Steps:

- Encourage comprehensive and site specific solutions that address issues of compatibility of commercial areas with surrounding uses.

Staff comment: The site would allow the applicant to adapt their signage to meet the businesses needs by replacing an existing sign with a sign that is actually smaller in area.

- 6. And, does in all other respects conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located upon approval of this conditional use permit.**

Planning staff is unaware of any conflict between the proposed use and the regulations of the proposed OR3 District given the provisions of section 543.340.

VARIANCE:

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code for wall signage above six (6) stories in excess of 300 square feet:

- 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.**

The provisions of the code would prevent the applicant from replacing the existing wall sign with a wall sign with the same vertical dimension but less overall surface area than the current wall sign.

- 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.**

The circumstances are unique insofar as the City has previously granted conditional use permits for wall signage at this location. A company name change has prompted the need for its replacement.

- 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.**

The new sign would be proportional with the building and should not prove injurious to enjoyment of other area properties.

- 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.**

Granting the proposed variance would 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.

In addition to the variance criteria above, 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 may be approved if the following criteria are met:

- (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.**

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ-2585

The sign would be located a substantial distance from other signage on the property and would not lead to sign clutter on the property or in the vicinity.

(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 sign will incorporate a relatively simple design and logo, and reduce the total square footage of wall signage currently existing on the building.

VARIANCE:

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code to increase the size and height of freestanding signage:

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.

The provisions of the code would prevent the applicant from replacing the existing freestanding signage with freestanding signage of a similar vertical and horizontal dimension but with less overall surface area lettering than the current signage.

Summary of Site at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast:

Existing: a two panel ground sign of 192 sf (per panel) of 16 ft width and 10 ft height.

Proposed: a two panel ground sign of 182 sf (per panel) of 12 ft width and 16 ft height including a 5 ft tall base.

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.

The circumstances are unique insofar as the City has previously granted conditional use permits for freestanding signage at this location. A company name change has prompted the need for its replacement.

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.

The new signage would be proportional to the existing signage it would replace and should not prove injurious to enjoyment of other area properties.

- 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.**

Granting the proposed variance would 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.

In addition to the variance criteria above, 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 may be approved if the following criteria are met:

- (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 signage would be located in approximately the same location as the existing signage and would not lead to sign clutter on the property or in the vicinity.

- (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 signage will incorporate a relatively simple design, incorporate stone masonry bases and surface trim, and reduce the total coverage area of signage currently existing at the sites.

VARIANCE:

Findings Required by the Minneapolis Zoning Code to allow more than one freestanding sign per zoning lot:

- 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.**

The provisions of the code would prevent the applicant from adding a solid structure, identified as a Signature Wall by the applicant, of approximately 5¼ feet in height, 2 feet in width, and 26½ feet in length, for additional signage. Assuming approval of the freestanding signage at the site, the Signature Wall would constitute a second freestanding sign for the zoning lot.

The proposed signature lettering, “University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital (logo) Fairview” and “University of Minnesota Children’s Hospital (logo) Fairview” and “University Campus” would be approximately 8½ feet wide by 5 feet tall and part of a freestanding sign with a 5 ft. base standing a total of 12 feet wide and 16 feet tall. Therefore, the signature wall is not necessary because the applicant has already demonstrated that one freestanding sign has enough space for the proposed signature lettering.

Proposal for 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast:

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ-2585

In addition to the freestanding sign a 139 sf masonry surfaced signature wall (5 ft 3 inch height by 26.5 ft length) with an undeclared amount of lettering. It is unclear whether the 139 sf masonry surfaced signature wall (5 ft 3 inch height by 26.5 ft length) would have 34 sf of lettering (2 institutional titles at 17 sf each) added at a future date to match the related Riverside signage reviewed under BZZ 2579.

- 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.**

The circumstances are unique insofar as the City has previously granted conditional use permits for freestanding signage at this location. A company name change has been the catalyst for the proposal to add a signature wall to the site.

- 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.**

The Signature Wall would be a new element at the site and is intended to provide identification along East River Road and Harvard Street SE for the medical building. The signature wall would be built on grade and obstruct existing site lines.

- 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.**

Granting the proposed variance would not substantially increase the congestion of the public streets or increase the danger of fire. However, staff is concerned that the signature wall could be detrimental to site lines, public welfare, and safety for vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic and do not meet the intent of the City's crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) standard 530.260 (1) for natural surveillance and visibility. See CPTED standards below.

530.260. Crime prevention through environmental design. Site plans shall employ best practices to increase natural surveillance and visibility, to control and guide movement on the site, and to distinguish between public and non-public spaces. Site plans shall include the following crime prevention design elements:

- (1) Natural surveillance and visibility. Design the site, landscaping, and buildings to promote natural observation and maximize the opportunities for people to observe adjacent spaces and public sidewalks.
- (2) Lighting levels. Provide lighting on site, at all building entrances, and along walkways that maintains a minimum acceptable level of security while not creating glare or excessive lighting of the site.

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ 2585

(3) Territorial reinforcement and space delineation. Locate landscaping, sidewalks, lighting, fencing and building features to clearly guide pedestrian movement on or through the site and to control and restrict people to appropriate locations.

(4) Natural access control. 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.

In addition to the variance criteria above, 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 may be approved if the following criteria are met:

(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 signature wall as proposed may have a total of 34 square feet of lettering on it, identifying the medical institution. It is unknown whether the wall could become graffiti target or if the applicant will pursue additional signage area on it in the future.

(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 signature wall would match the stone masonry base and surface trim of the freestanding sign proposed for the same site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation of the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division for the conditional use permit:

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development – Planning Division recommends that the City Planning Commission adopt the above findings and **approve** the conditional use permit to replace an existing sign in a location greater than six stories in height with 405 sf of illuminated (L.E.D.) wall signage, including a logo on the North façade on an existing medical building located at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast.

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 above findings and **approve** the variance to exceed the three hundred (300) square feet dimension limitation up to 405 sf of illuminated (L.E.D.) wall signage, including a logo on the North façade on an existing medical building located at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast.

Minneapolis City Planning Division Report
BZZ-2585

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 above findings and **approve** the variance to exceed the size and height limitation for freestanding signs by allowing a two-panel sign up to 182 square feet per side and height of 16 feet located at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast.

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 above findings and **deny** the variance for more than one (1) freestanding sign per zoning lot for a signature wall located at 500 Harvard Street Avenue Southeast.

Attachments:

1. Statement of use and application materials
2. Findings
3. Correspondence
4. Zoning map
5. Plans and Photos