

**LAND USE APPLICATION SUMMARY**

*Property Location:* 127 Grant Street West  
*Project Name:* The Brentwood Apartments Signage  
*Prepared By:* [Janelle Widmeier](#), Senior City Planner, (612) 673-3156  
*Applicant:* West Grant Associates  
*Project Contact:* Charlie Berg, Imaginality Designs  
*Request:* To install a projecting sign.  
*Required Applications:*

<b>Variance</b>	To increase the maximum height of a projecting sign from 14 feet to 20 feet.
<b>Variance</b>	To increase the maximum area of a projecting sign from 12 square feet to 22 square feet.

**SITE DATA**

<b>Existing Zoning</b>	OR3 Institutional Office Residence District DP Downtown Parking Overlay District SH Shoreland Overlay District
<b>Lot Area</b>	7,260 square feet
<b>Ward(s)</b>	7
<b>Neighborhood(s)</b>	Citizens for a Loring Park Community
<b>Designated Future Land Use</b>	Mixed Use
<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>	July 19, 2016	<b>Date Extension Letter Sent</b>	Not applicable
<b>End of 60-Day Decision Period</b>	September 17, 2016	<b>End of 120-Day Decision Period</b>	Not applicable

## BACKGROUND

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND PRESENT USE.** The site is located at the corner of Grant Street West and Spruce Place. A 4-level brick building is located on the subject property. The building was permitted for construction in 1916. There are 31 apartments in the building. The main residential entrance faces Grant Street. Some commercial uses are also located on the first level facing Spruce Place, including a leasing office. The leasing office serves the subject building as well as the building on the adjacent residential properties of 117 and 121 Grant Street West.

**SURROUNDING PROPERTIES AND NEIGHBORHOOD.** There is a mix of uses in the immediate area, including high-density residential, food and beverage, and retail uses. The site is one block east of Loring Park.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION.** The applicant is proposing to install a projecting sign on the corner of the building facing the intersection of Grant Street and Spruce Place. The projecting sign would be 22 square feet in area (3 feet by 7 feet 4 inches) and would be located approximately 20 feet above the adjacent grade. In the OR3 district, a projecting sign is allowed to be up to 12 square feet in area and 14 feet above the adjacent grade. Variances are required to increase the maximum size and height for the proposed sign. An existing projecting sign would be removed when the new sign is installed.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS.** Comments from Citizens for a Loring Park Community were received and are attached to this 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 1) a variance to increase the maximum height of a projecting sign from 12 feet to 20 feet and 2) a variance to increase the maximum area of a projecting sign from 12 square feet to 22 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.*

**Both variances:** 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. The OR3 district also does not allow projecting signs to exceed 12 square feet in area. On the Grant Street wall, approximately 75 square feet of signage is allowed. On the Spruce Place wall, approximately 180 square feet of signage is allowed. The applicant is proposing to locate a 22 square foot projecting sign 20 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. Because the first floor elevation is below the public sidewalk level, a projecting sign at 14 feet, such as the existing sign, doesn't align with any architectural features of the building. The proposed height would align with the entablature of the residential entrance portal facing Grant Street. 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.

Although the proposed sign would be located on the property of 127 Grant Street, it would also provide identification for two other adjacent 4-story buildings under the same ownership at the corner of Grant Street and Spruce Place. The proposed sign location is above the main leasing office for these buildings. The applicant is requesting a larger projecting sign to increase visibility and provide the main identification for the complex.

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.*

**Both variances:** 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.

Although the proposed sign would be located on the property of 127 Grant Street, it would also provide identification for two other adjacent 4-story buildings under the same ownership at the corner of Grant Street and Spruce Place. The proposed sign location is above the main leasing office for these buildings. To increase visibility and to be compatible with the architectural character of the building, the applicant is requesting to locate a 22 square foot projecting sign at 20 feet above grade. A projecting sign at 14 feet, such as the existing sign, doesn't align with any architectural features of the building. The proposed height would align with the entablature of the residential entrance portal facing Grant Street. Also, the proposed amount of signage is far less than what is allowed and the proposed size is compatible with the scale of the building. The requests are 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.*

**Both variances:** 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 20 feet and 22 square feet, the sign height and size would still be appropriate for a residential and pedestrian environment. 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.*

**Both variances:** 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.

The proposed sign would provide the primary identification for the building and the two adjacent buildings on Grant Street. In addition to the proposed sign, a 12 square foot wall sign is adjacent to the entrance of the leasing office. The proposed amount of signage is far less than what is allowed. Placing the proposed 22 square foot sign at 20 feet would be compatible with the architectural character of the building and would still be appropriate for a pedestrian environment. Provided the sign height does not exceed 20 feet, the sign proposal would be consistent with the purpose of the OR3 district and 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.*

**Both variances:** The primary exterior material of the 4-story subject building and adjacent buildings is brick. The building has a sunken first level. A projecting sign at 14 feet, such as the existing sign, doesn't align with any architectural features of the building. The proposed height would align with the entablature of the residential entrance portal facing Grant Street. The bottom of the sign would be 10.5 feet above the adjacent grade. The size of the sign at 22 square feet in area would be proportionate in size to the building. The sign cabinet would be aluminum and the acrylic channel letters would be internally illuminated. Increasing the allowed height and area would allow for a sign that relates in size, shape, material, color, illumination and character of the building and the use.

**Additional Standards for Variances within the SH Shoreland Overlay District**

In addition, the Planning Commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors when considering conditional use permit or variance requests within the SH Shoreland Overlay District:

1. *The prevention of soil erosion or other possible pollution of public waters, both during and after construction.*

The sign would be attached to an existing building and would not require any soil disturbance to install.

2. *Limiting the visibility of structures and other development from protected waters.*

The site is located one block from Loring Park where Loring Pond is located. The proposed sign would not be visible from the pond due to the existing development, topography and vegetation.

3. *The suitability of the protected water to safely accommodate the types, uses and numbers of watercraft that the development may generate.*

This standard is not applicable for the proposed development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Community Planning and Economic Development recommends that the Zoning Board of Adjustment adopt staff findings for the applications by West Grant Associates for the property located at 127 Grant Street West:

**A. Variance to increase the maximum allowed sign area.**

Recommended motion: **Approve** the variance to increase the maximum area of a projecting sign from 12 square feet to 22 square feet, subject to the following condition:

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

**B. Variance to increase the maximum allowed sign height.**

Recommended motion: **Approve** the variance to increase the maximum height of a projecting sign from 14 feet to 20 feet, subject to the following condition:

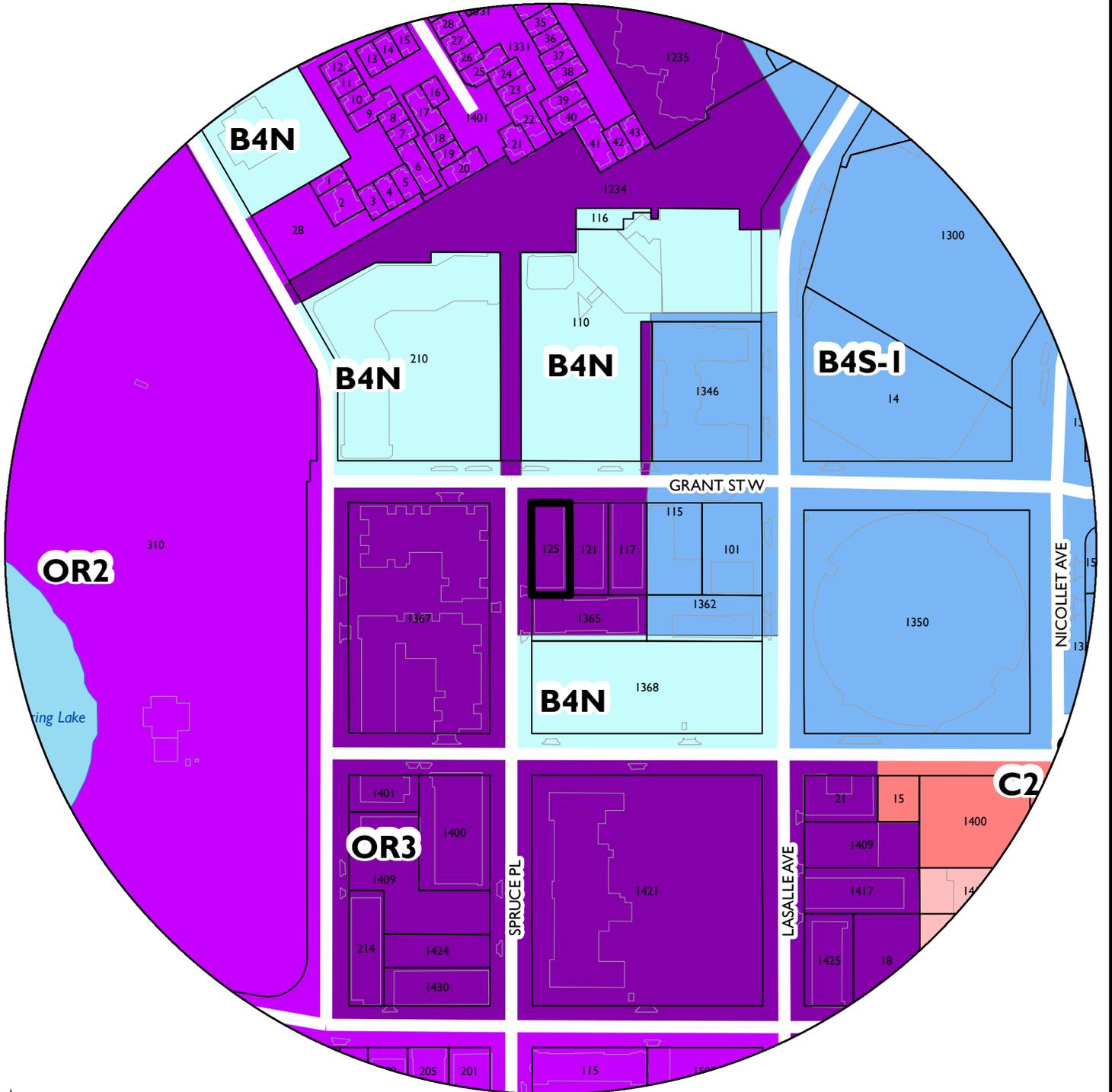
1. Approval of the sign permit by the Department of Community Planning and Economic Development.

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Zoning map
2. Written description and findings submitted by applicant
3. Site plan
4. Sign details/Building elevations
5. Photos
6. Comments received

NAME OF APPLICANT

WARD



PROPERTY ADDRESS  
**127 Grant Street West**

FILE NUMBER  
**BZZ-7803**

Property: The Brentwood Apartments  
Owner/Operator: KMS Management  
Address: 127 West Grant Street, Minneapolis  
Applicant: Charlie Berg  
Imaginality Designs

July 7, 2016

## Sign Variance

To allow height of the proposed projecting sign from grade to be 20 ft. and to allow area of the sign to be 22 sq. ft.

The current sign code in OR3 states that height allowance on a projecting sign is 14 ft. and an area allowance of 12 sq. ft.

The difficulty with the proposed signage lies primarily within the existing constraints of the building. The garden level entry to the first floor office space, where the sign is to be placed, requires use of awning to provide weather protection. This existing awning raises the required clearance of a projecting sign from 8 feet above grade to nearly 10.5 feet above grade. Our request for extended height and sign area would allow for placement of a vertical blade sign with ample space above the awning that matches the character of the building, while remaining legible to traffic from it's crossroads of both Spruce Place and West Grant Street.

The proposed trapezoidal blade takes cues from the architectural keystones scattered about the building. This means the requested 22 square foot allowance as calculated by length times height has much less impact than the resulting 15.3 square foot trapezoidal area. This additional square footage allows decorative panels that will help the sign tie in further to the architectural stylings of the structure. It also places the top of the sign in alignment with a prominent ridge on the West Grant portal entry, while maintaining a connection with KMS's main leasing office below. Our concern is that a trapezoidal sign that fits the defined 12 square foot rectangle will both lose visibility through the tree lines planted along both West Grant and Spruce (creating more of a curious distraction for drivers than a wayfinding element) as well as be disproportionate with the three buildings making up The Brentwood Apartments.

A slightly larger sign allowance with an increased height above grade would allow us to solve issues of legibility and obstruction with a sign that corresponds to it's own architecture, as well as the vibrant personality of the Loring Park neighborhood. We also believe that similar properties, in similar districts allow signage of this height and scale.

The proposed variance does not alter the essential character of the locality nor does it cause significant sign clutter in the area or on the building. Upon installation, it will not impose any danger to the health, safety, or the general welfare and comfort of the public. It's placement and size will not effect the traffic flow of the area, and it's increased size will improve legibility, decreasing any chance of distraction. The proposed sign will rest directly above office space for KMS's Loring Park office as it is the most logical choice of placement. This placement will not cause any obstruction to or hinder other properties in its vicinity.

With exception of the proposed variance, the proposed sign conforms with with all other applical regulations of the district in which it is located.

Property: The Brentwood Apartments  
Owner/Operator: KMS Management  
Address: 127 West Grant Street, Minneapolis  
Applicant: Charlie Berg  
Imaginality Designs

July 5, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

We, Imaginality Designs on behalf of our client KMS, will be submitting a variance to the City of Minneapolis for a proposed projecting sign located at The Brentwood Apartments.

The site address is 127 W. Grant Street, Minneapolis.

Our variance is requesting an increased height and area allowance in order to match the architecture and scale of the building.

The current height allowance for a projecting sign in an OR3 zoning district is 14 ft. high from grade to top of the sign. The current area allowance for a projecting sign's face is 12 sq. ft. as defined by a rectangular box.

The proposed sign is designed as a trapezoidal blade to match architectural keystones on the building and the rectangular area leaves much unused space, significantly reducing the visual weight and legibility of the proposed sign. An existing and necessary awning over the garden level entry to KMS's leasing office bumps the minimum clearance from 8 ft. above grade to 10.5 ft above grade

**Our request** is to mount the the sign so the top decorative panel of the sign aligns with a prominent detail on the West Grant Street portal entry, nearing 6 ft. higher than the current allowance. The height from the top of sign to grade would be no higher than 20 feet, with the bottom of the sign raised slightly above the top of existing awning. The resulting sign face would be a 15.3 sq. ft. trapezoid or a 22 sq. ft. rectangle.

**The sign location** is at the corner of Spruce Place and West Grant Street. It is to project at a 45 degree angle from the building. The Brentwood complex includes the two buildings directly East at 121 and 117, as well as this building at 127/125. This is KMS's main leasing office for all of their properties in the Loring Park neighborhood.

**This location provides difficulty** through combination of several factors. Our main concern is that because the garden level entry needs some form of weather barrier, there is extremely limited space for impactful and legible signage. Increasing the size to the portal entry ridge allows better visibility for road traffic through the trees planted along both streets. It also allows us to design a sign that is rationally proportioned to the building that aligns with prominent details on the facade and decorate it in such a way that corresponds to building's character without decreasing legibility of the sign.

These details can be seen in the attached PDF. There is a small existing blade sign that will be removed during installation of the proposed sign.

The following neighborhood organizations and City of Minneapolis Wards are copied to this letter:

**Ward 7**  
**Loring Park Neighborhood**

We are aware of the variance process and will be submitting the required land use application and supporting documentation to:

Janelle Widmeier  
Senior City Planner  
City of Minneapolis - Community Planning and Economic Development  
250 4th St S - Room 300  
Minneapolis, MN 55415  
612-673-3156  
janelle.widmeier@minneapolismn.gov

Thank you for taking the time to review the proposed project.

Charlie Berg  
Imaginality Designs  
charlie@imaginalitydesigns.com  
763-545-4123

# THE BRENTWOOD



Date: 04/25/16  
 Job Number: KMS1097  
 Revision Number: 1  
 Drawings For: Permit  
 Designer/Sales: Charlie/Joe

Scale: na

Pantone Info:

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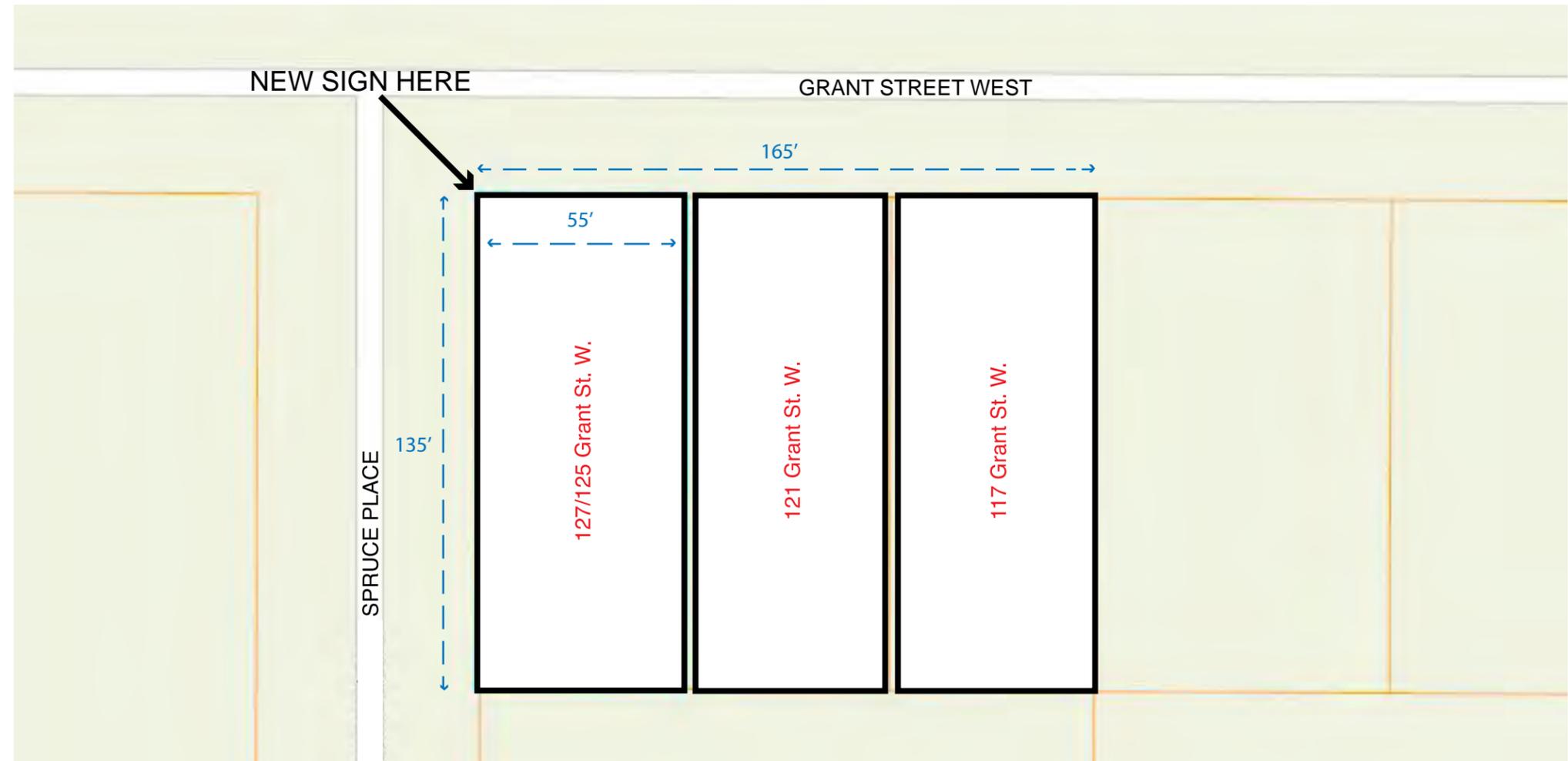
Notes:  
 Main Leasing Office for 3 Buildings of "The Brentwood, and KMS Management Properties in Loring Park District

All ideas, designs, arrangements, and plans indicated by these drawings are property of Imaginality Designs, LLC and are created for use and in connection with the specified project. These ideas, designs, arrangements, and plans are not to be used nor disclosed by to any person, firm, or corporation for any purpose without the written consent of Imaginality Designs, LLC. Contractors shall verify and be responsible for all dimensions and conditions of the job. All shop details and deviations from the shown dimensions and conditions must be approved by Imaginality Designs, LLC before proceeding with fabrication. All written dimensions shall take precedence over scaled dimensions.

*For questions or comments please contact Imaginality Designs, LLC at 763.545.4123 or [www.imaginalitydesigns.com](http://www.imaginalitydesigns.com)*

Existing Signage to be Removed

Existing Sign Panel

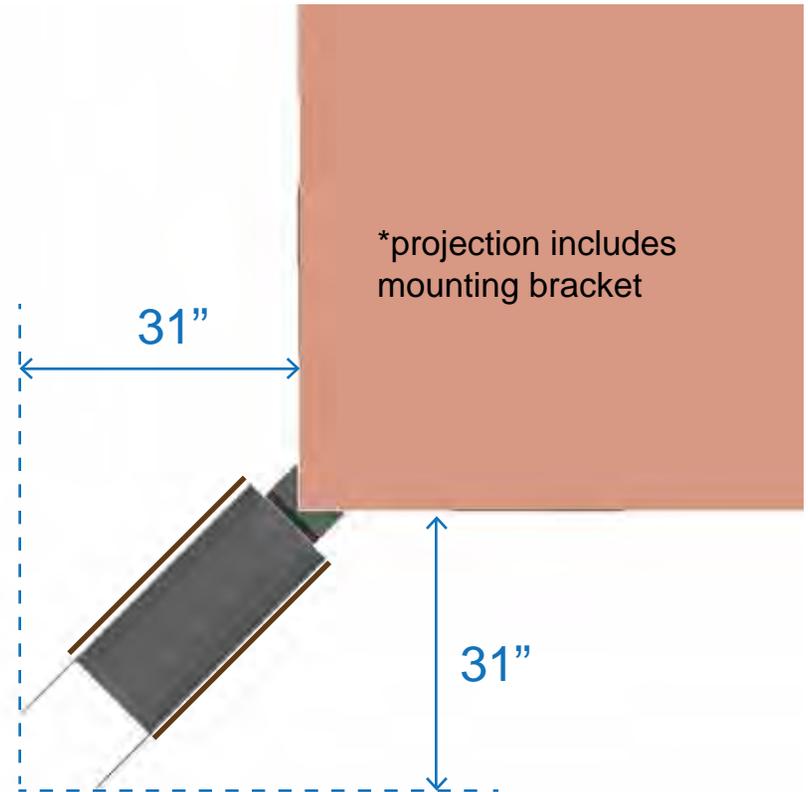




$$A=(7'4'')(3')=22 \text{ sq ft}$$

or

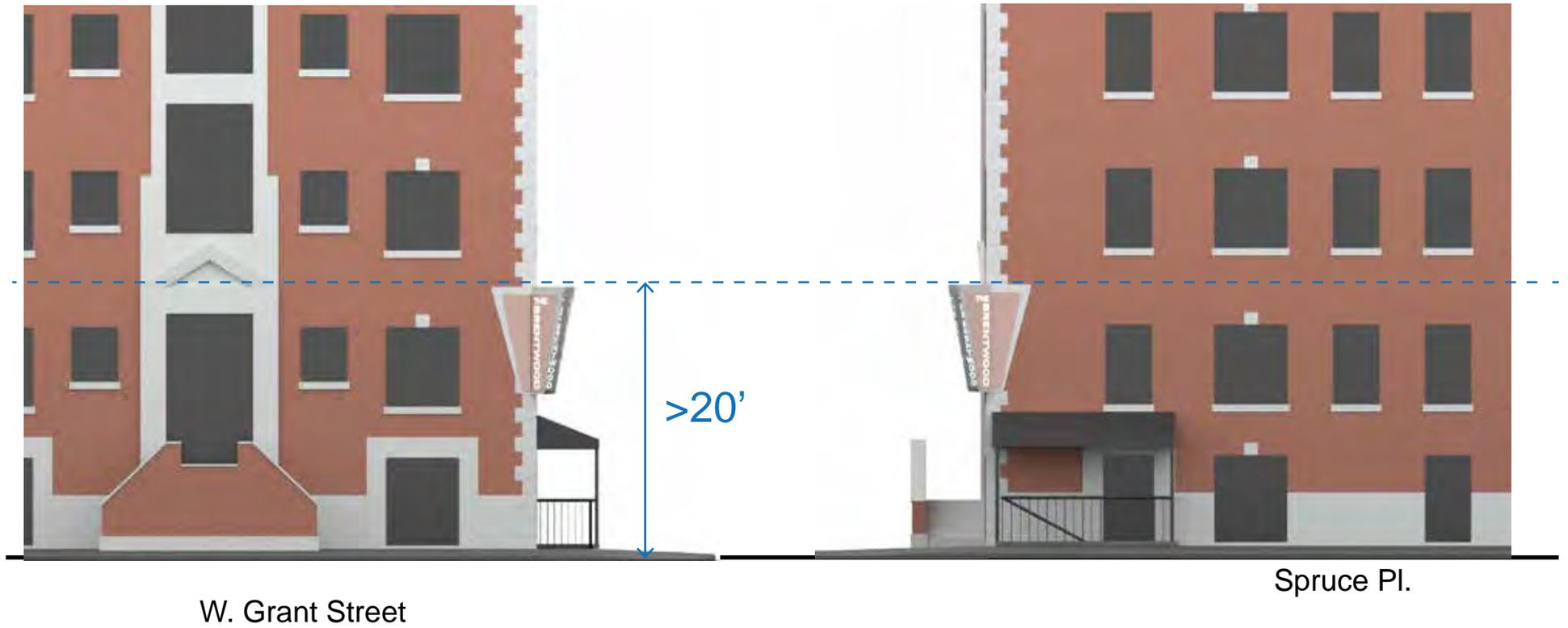
$$A=7'4''(3'+1'2'')/2=15.3 \text{ sq ft}$$



Date: 07/05/16  
 Job Number: KMS1097  
 Revision Number: 2  
 Drawings For: Permit  
 Designer/Sales: Charlie

Scale: na  
 Notes:  
 Aluminum and Acrylic  
 Construction. LED Lighting  
 through letters and  
 some edges

# THE BRENTWOOD



Date: 07/05/16  
Job Number: KMS1097  
Revision Number: 2  
Drawings For: Permit  
Designer/Sales: Charlie

Scale: na  
Notes:

# THE BRENTWOOD



*imaginability* designs

Date: 07/05/16

Job Number: KMS1097

Revision Number: 2

Drawings For: Permit

Designer/Sales: Charlie

Scale: na

Notes:

# THE BRENTWOOD



Date: 07/05/16  
Job Number: KMS1097  
Revision Number: 2  
Drawings For: Permit  
Designer/Sales: Charlie

Scale: na  
Notes:

# THE BRENTWOOD

**From:** [Jana Metge](#)  
**To:** [Porter, Fatimat Q.](#); [Widmeier, Janelle A.](#)  
**Cc:** [Goodman, Lisa R.](#); [Sadler, Patrick A.](#); [Weakly, Ruth A.](#); [Gary Simpson](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Notice of a Public Hearing  
**Date:** Thursday, July 21, 2016 7:34:07 PM

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July 22, 2016

Dear Ms. Widmeier,

Citizens for a Loring Park Community (CLPC), through the review of our Nicollet Ave Safety Coalition unanimously supports this application.

The Nicollet Coalition meets monthly and Includes Businesses, Property Owners, and Block leaders in and around Nicollet Avenue from Grant to the Freeway. This meeting is coordinated by CLPC. We had a presentation by the property owner, as well as a handout distributed illustrating the proposed design.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Jana L. Metge, Coordinator  
Citizens for a Loring Park Community  
[www.loringpark.org](http://www.loringpark.org)

On Thursday, July 21, 2016, Porter, Fatimat Q. <[Fatimat.Porter@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:Fatimat.Porter@minneapolismn.gov)> wrote:

July 21, 2016

Citizens for a Loring Park Community  
1645 Hennepin Avenue, #204  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

**NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING**

**Regarding: 127 Grant Street West**

Imaginality Designs, on behalf of West Grant Associates, has filed the following applications for the property located at 127 Grant Street West to allow a projecting sign: