

STAFF DESIGN COMMISSION REPORT

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Project Name: 44 S. Vail Avenue - Sign Variation
Project Address: 44 S. Vail Avenue
Prepared By: Steve Hautzinger

PETITION INFORMATION:

DC Number: 24-008
Petitioner Name: Dale Balsitis
Petitioner Address: Corporate Sign Systems
900 Central Avenue
Roselle, IL 60172
Meeting Date: March 12, 2024

Date Prepared: February 28, 2024

Requested Action(s):

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-201.h.5.b, to allow a ground sign to be located in an area with a 7-foot setback, where the parcel must have an area with a 20-foot setback for ground sign placement.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-301.d, to allow a ground sign to be located 5-feet from the building wall, where no ground sign shall be closer than 6-feet from any building or other structure.

ANALYSIS:

The subject design is being forwarded to the Design Commission for review pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Municipal Code, specifically Section 6-501 (e)(1), which states that the Design Commission "shall review all Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Permit and Sign Permit applications for new construction and those improvements which affect the architectural design of the building, site improvements or signage to determine whether it meets with the standards, requirements and purposes of the Design Guidelines and Chapter 30, Sign Regulations."

Summary:

44 S. Vail is an existing multi-tenant office building located in Downtown Arlington Heights. The property owner wants to provide exterior signage for each of the building tenants, so they are proposing a small multi-tenant ground sign to be located next to the main building entrance facing Vail Avenue. Per Chapter 30 sign code, there are numerous code requirements for ground signs in the Downtown. The proposed sign does not comply with two of the code requirements. First, per code, the site is required to have an area with a 20-foot setback for ground sign placement, such as at the Jewel grocery store. The subject property only has a 7-foot setback, so a variation is required. Second, ground signs are required to be placed no closer than 6-feet from any building or structure. In order to maintain some clearance from the public sidewalk, the petitioner is proposing to place the ground sign 16-inches from the sidewalk (4-inches from the property line), resulting in only 5-feet of clearance from the building wall where 6-feet is required, which requires a variation.

Table 1 below includes a complete summary of all applicable code requirements.

Table 1: Summary of Downtown Ground Sign Requirements per Section 30-201.h.5:

	Item	Code Requirement	Proposed	Remarks / Recommendations
a.	Lot Size	A ground sign is allowed only where the parcel size is 25,000 square feet or greater.	The subject property is 42,811 square feet.	Complies with code.
b.	Parcel Setback	The parcel must have an area with a 20-foot setback for ground sign placement.	The existing building has a 7-foot setback.	Variation Required.

(Table 1 continued on next page)

c.	Landscaping	The area under the sign must be landscaped two feet out from the sign face, or proportional amounts of landscaping on site, as may be approved by the Director of Planning and Community Development.	The proposed sign will be placed in an existing landscape bed along the front of the building.	Complies with code.
d.	Size	The ground sign shall not be taller than 6-feet and greater than 30 square feet.	The proposed sign is 5-feet tall and 12.5 square feet.	Complies with code.
e.	Automobile Service Station Signs	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
f.	Design	A ground sign in the downtown is encouraged to be designed to match the architecture and detailing of the development or be in keeping with the character of the downtown. A ground sign with a base of high quality durable material is encouraged. Landscaping around the base of the sign is encouraged to have year round color to be comprised of evergreens, drought tolerant perennials and annuals	The sign is proposed to be fabricated with a black aluminum cabinet to match the building entrance.	Complies with code.
	Clearance (Section 30-301.d)	No ground sign shall be closer than six feet from any building or other structure.	5-feet proposed	Variation Required.
	Sign Setback (Section 30-301.f)	Monument signs are ground signs displayed on a decorative wall or structure, which does not exceed six feet in height. If the proposed monument sign conforms with the height standards and does not obstruct visibility, it will be exempt from the setback requirements of this Section. Zero setback required.	4-inch setback proposed from the property line (16-inches from the sidewalk)	Complies with code.

Sign Variation Criteria:

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-901 sets out the criteria for granting a sign variation.

- a. *That the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the Petitioner.*
- b. *That the granting of said variation will not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare;*
- c. *That the variation will serve to relieve the Petitioner from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship, and will not merely serve to provide the Petitioner with a competitive advantage over similar businesses;*
- d. *That the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality;*
- e. *That the Petitioner's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this chapter.*

The petitioner has submitted a letter addressing the hardship criteria, stating that without the proposed sign, the businesses' existence in the building will not be known, and they will not have fair exposure to the foot and vehicle traffic in this great location. The petitioner also states that the sign will not create any hazard, and it is elegantly designed to fit with the building architecture.

Staff Comments:

Staff worked with the petitioner on numerous exterior signage concepts including wall sign and ground sign options. Staff encouraged the proposed ground sign as a tasteful and effective signage solution for the building. Given the constraints of the site and the existing building, Staff feels that the proposed sign is the best solution to satisfy the needs of the tenants.

Staff's only comment on the design is that the sign is quite close to the public sidewalk. Staff recommends moving the sign 12-inches further back from the sidewalk, providing 28-inches of clearance from the sidewalk, and leaving 39-inches of clearance in front of the Fire Department Connection (where 36-inches minimum clearance is required). This will change the variation to allow a ground sign to be located 4-feet from the building wall (instead of 5-feet), where per code no ground sign shall be closer than 6-feet from any building or other structure.

Staff also recommends that if the Design Commission supports the proposed ground sign, it is recommended that a condition be included to prohibit wall signs on the south and west walls of the building. This will leave the option for a future wall sign on the front of the building facing Vail Avenue, but if wall signs were installed on all three street frontages along with the ground sign, it could become excessive.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Design Commission recommend **approval** to the Village Board for the following sign variations for 44 S. Vail Avenue:

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-201.h.5.b, to allow a ground sign to be located in an area with a 7-foot setback, where the parcel must have an area with a 20-foot setback for ground sign placement.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-301.d, to allow a ground sign to be located 5-feet from the building wall, where no ground sign shall be closer than 6-feet from any building or other structure.

This recommendation is subject to compliance with the plans received 1/31/24, Federal, State, and Village Codes, regulations, and policies, and the issuance of all required permits, and the following conditions:

1. Staff recommends moving the sign 12-inches further back from the sidewalk, providing 28-inches of clearance from the sidewalk, and leaving 39-inches of clearance in front of the Fire Department Connection (where 36-inches minimum clearance is required). This will change the variation to allow a ground sign to be located 4-feet from the building wall (instead of 5-feet), where per code no ground sign shall be closer than 6-feet from any building or other structure.
2. Wall signs shall be prohibited on the south and west exterior walls.
3. This review deals with architectural design only and should not be construed to be an approval of, or to have any other impact on, any other zoning and/or land use issues or decisions that stem from zoning, building, signage or any other reviews. In addition to the normal technical review, permit drawings will be reviewed for consistency with the Design Commission and any other Commission or Board approval conditions. It is the architect/homeowner/builder's responsibility to comply with the Design Commission approval and ensure that building permit plans comply with all zoning code, building permit and signage requirements.



February 28, 2024

Steve Hautzinger AIA, Design Planner
Department of Planning & Community Development

c: Charles Witherington-Perkins, Director of Planning and Community Development, Petitioner, DC File 24-008