

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE

PARKING PAVILION

STANDARDS FOR A SIGN VARIANCE

Description of the Proposal.

North Central College is constructing a Parking Pavilion located on the west side of Brainard Street at Highland Avenue. The Parking Pavilion will consist of four levels of parking and will accommodate approximately 530 parking spaces. The Parking Pavilion will be accessed via a new driveway to be constructed on the north side of the Parking Pavilion as an extension of Highland Avenue; there will be one vehicular entryway to the Parking Pavilion from this driveway. There will be another vehicular entryway to the Parking Pavilion on the south side of the building from Brainard Street. There will be two circulation towers which will provide pedestrian access to the Parking Pavilion and will include the elevators and stairways – one on the east side of the Parking Pavilion along Brainard Street and one at the northwest corner of the Parking Pavilion adjacent to the Residence Halls and connecting sidewalk system. The College's submittal includes the Campus map, Site Plan, Signage Information and site photographs.

North Central College proposes to install one sign on each circulation tower. The sign on the west circulation tower is internal to the College Campus and is not visible from any public right-of-way; therefore, the Sign Regulations are not applicable to that sign. The east circulation tower faces Brainard Street with the proposed sign located on the north façade visible from Brainard Street; therefore, that sign is subject to the Sign Regulations.

Under the Sign Regulations, the North Central College Campus is considered an "Educational Campus" which limits the size of signage to 32 square feet. The proposed sign on the north façade of the east circulation tower is 90 square feet in area. North Central College is requesting a variance to allow the size of the sign on the east circulation tower to be 90 square feet in size.

The variance is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and the adopted comprehensive master plan.

The purpose of the Sign Regulations is to promote "the optimum conditions for communication between people and their environment."

The Parking Pavilion is a four-level parking structure which is being constructed in the "Merner bowl", i.e., that portion of the Campus adjacent to the Merner Field House which is significantly lower in grade than the area around it. Due to the grade differential, the Parking Pavilion will not appear as tall as a four-level structure from the intersection of Brainard Street and Highland Avenue; it will appear as a 1½ level structure.

The Parking Pavilion will be accessed primarily from the intersection of Chicago Avenue and Brainard Street. The Parking Pavilion will provide parking for resident students, commuter students, faculty, staff, and visitors. Due to the diverse population that will be using the Parking Pavilion, it must be readily identifiable to its potential users. The sign on the east circulation tower has a name visibility distance of 225 feet. The Chicago Avenue/Brainard Street intersection is approximately 380 feet north of the Parking Pavilion. The size of that sign is appropriate for the visitors coming to the Campus via Chicago Avenue and Brainard Street.

This sign provides effective communication for the community, thereby being in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Sign Regulations.

This proposed sign is compatible with other Campus signage and maintains the integrity of the College Campus, thereby being in harmony with the Comprehensive Master Plan.

Strict enforcement of the Zoning Regulations would result in practical difficulties or impose exceptional hardships due to special and unusual conditions which are not generally found on other properties in the same zoning district.

The special and unusual condition of the Parking Pavilion is its location on the College Campus. The Parking Pavilion is a significant structure. The College wanted to minimize its impact on the adjacent residential neighborhood by locating it in the “Merner bowl”. It then became important to adequately identify the building so that its users can easily and safely access the Parking Pavilion. The proposed signage accomplishes this goal. Due to the size and design of the Parking Pavilion, a larger sign is appropriate to maintain the architectural integrity of the building. If the Sign Regulations were strictly enforced, the Parking Pavilion would not be effectively identified.

The variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood and will not be a substantial detriment to adjacent property.

The Parking Pavilion is essentially internal to the College Campus. It is surrounded by College buildings and facilities. It has minimal impact on the adjacent residential neighborhood due to the grade differential. The proposed signage is similar to signage on other College buildings (e.g., Wentz Science Center/Benedetti-Wehrli Stadium/Wentz Health Sciences and Engineering building). Therefore, the requested variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood nor be a substantial detriment to adjacent properties.