

NORTH CENTRAL COLLEGE

430 SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET

STANDARDS FOR A SIGN VARIANCE

Description of the Project

The property located at 430 South Washington Street is situated on the east side of Washington Street, north of the Burger King Restaurant and across the DuPage River from the College's Campus ("430 Property"). It was the site of a deteriorated commercial building which had environmental issues. The community was concerned that this property did not provide a welcoming entry to Downtown Naperville.

In commemoration of its 150th Anniversary in 2012, the College purchased the 430 Property. In 2016, the College and the City entered into an agreement whereby the College (a) granted to the City an easement over the 430 Property for the City to (i) raze the existing building, (ii) undertake the necessary environmental remediation, (iii) improve the 430 Property with Riverwalk amenities, and (iv) incorporate the 430 Property into the Naperville Riverwalk and (b) reserved the right to install certain College-related amenities and features on the 430 Property "subject to compliance with the Naperville Municipal Code then in effect," including the right to install "NCC signage in any format, including, but not limited to digital and any other future format" ("430 Easement Agreement").

Pursuant to the 430 Easement Agreement, the City razed the building and undertook the environmental remediation. At the time of entering into the 430 Easement Agreement, it was the College's understanding that the City committed to creating an extension of the Naperville Riverwalk on the 430 Property and to beautify the 430 Property.

The City has since identified the need to reconstruct the Washington Street bridge. That work should commence in 2023. The College is working with the City on an agreement to allow the City to use the 430 Property for staging activities during the Washington Street bridge reconstruction. It is anticipated that the bridge reconstruction will take eighteen to twenty-four months to complete.

The City anticipates that the improvement of the 430 Property will begin in 2025 or 2026 after the Washington Street bridge reconstruction.

With the improvement of the 430 Property, the College proposes to install College-related features, including a gateway feature with signage as provided in the 430 Easement Agreement. The gateway feature will include columns consistent with the existing stone columns located throughout the College's campus. The signage will be located on an arch over the columns and will identify the College ("430 Sign").

Since the execution of the 430 Easement Agreement, the City has amended the Sign Regulations and under the current Sign Regulations the proposed 430 Sign is not permitted to be installed on

the Property. Therefore, the College needs the following variance to allow the 430 Sign to be placed on the 430 Property:

- Section 6-16-6:3: To allow signage on an accessory structure in the Downtown Central Business District.

Since the 430 Property will be used for staging of the Washington Street bridge reconstruction and the improvement of the 430 Property will not begin until after the completion of the Washington Street bridge reconstruction, the College needs this additional variance for the 430 Sign/Property:

- Section 6-3-6:4.1: To extend the effective period of a variance from two years to two years after the City completes the Riverwalk improvements on the 430 Property.

Standards

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 430 Sign will identify North Central College as part of the Naperville community and create an entrance to the College campus.

By entering into the 430 Easement Agreement, the City acknowledged that a sign would be appropriate on the 430 Property. The 430 Sign is designed and sited to be compatible with the anticipated Riverwalk amenities and to fulfill the College’s intent in establishing visibility along Washington Street. Therefore, the 430 Sign will not negatively impact the public health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community.

The North Central College Master Land Use Plan provides that the “College will be open to collaboration with other owners in the use of property near campus where such collaboration presents opportunities for creative or shared use of facilities”. The acquisition of the 430 Property and the 430 Easement Agreement created a College/City partnership which eliminated an undesirable building and will create an extension of the Naperville Riverwalk for the community to enjoy. This proposal is in harmony with the North Central College Master Plan which is an element of the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan.

The Zoning Regulations provide that within two years of the approval of a variance, a building permit must be obtained, and construction of the improvement must commence. The earliest that the 430 Sign could be installed is 2025. Because the requested extension of time is based on known construction activities and the use of the 430 Property in the intervening time for a community purpose, this requested variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the Zoning Regulations.

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 conditions of the College's Campus are (i) its location in a primarily residential neighborhood, (ii) its location adjacent to Downtown Naperville, and (iii) its lack of frontage on a main road. The College acquired the 430 Property, in part, to establish additional visibility along Washington Street, a main road in Downtown Naperville. The 430 Sign will provide the necessary visibility. If the variance is not granted, the College will not be able to fulfill all of its intentions as expressed in the 430 Easement Agreement.

Because installation of the 430 Sign cannot begin until after the Washington Street bridge reconstruction, an extended effective period is necessary. If the variance is not granted, the College will be required to process the entire variance request again.

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

The 430 Sign will be sited on Washington Street. It will be located adjacent to Downtown Naperville and will not impact any residential areas. The design of the 430 Sign is compatible with the College's existing entry monument signs and does not involve any digital signage which is allowed under the 430 Easement Agreement. The design and location of the 430 Sign complements and is integrated into the proposed Riverwalk amenities. Based on these factors, this proposed sign will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood nor be a detriment to adjacent properties.

The timing of the installation of the 430 Sign will not affect the essential character of the neighborhood nor be a detriment to adjacent properties.