



Legislation Text

File #: 22-0794B, Version: 1

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:

Pass the ordinance approving variances for the property located at 430 S. Washington Street - PZC 22-1-047

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Gabrielle Mattingly, Community Planner

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:

On July 6, 2022 the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) considered PZC 22-1-047 and provided a positive recommendation on the request (approved 8,0). Staff concurs.

BACKGROUND:

The subject property is located on the east side of Washington Street and just across the West Branch of the DuPage River from the North Central College campus. The property is zoned B5 (Secondary Downtown District) and is currently vacant. The Owners and Petitioners, North Central College, intend to improve the property with a gateway feature with a sign to identify the property as an entrance to North Central College campus. The Petitioner is seeking approval of variances in order to construct this amenity.

The subject property is adjacent to the Washington Street Bridge and will be impacted by the City's Downtown Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project (Washington Project). The Washington Project will include replacing the Washington Street Bridge and improving portions of Washington Street.

DISCUSSION:

Sign Variance

The Petitioner proposes to improve the subject property with a gateway feature that has a sign to identify the entrance into the campus. The sign will be internally illuminated and will be installed on stone columns which match existing columns found throughout the campus.

The B5 zoning district is subject to the City's Downtown Central Business District sign code regulations. These regulations identify where signage can be placed on single-tenant buildings and multi-tenant buildings. The proposed gateway feature is an accessory structure and the sign code regulations do not permit signage to be installed on accessory structures.

The Petitioner is seeking approval of a variance to allow the proposed sign to be installed on the accessory structure.

The Petitioner has added a note to the proposed site plan that the location of the gateway sign may need to be modified based on consideration of the utility locations and new right-of-way resulting from the Washington Project. The final location of the structure will be determined during building permit review.

Staff is in support of the requested variance to permit signage on an accessory structure at the subject property finding the proposed sign variance furthers the purpose of the sign code by effectively communicating and identifying the site as an entrance point into the campus.

Findings of Fact

The Petitioner's responses to the Standards for Granting a Variance can be found in the attachments. Upon review, staff and the PZC agree with the Petitioner's Findings and recommend their adoption by the City Council.

Variance to the Effective Period of Variance

Per Section 6-3-6:4.1 (Effective Period of Variance) of the Municipal Code, variances are only valid for a period of two years from the date of the ordinance granting the variance unless a building permit is obtained within such period and the erection or alteration of a building or structure is started or the use is commenced within such period. Given the proposed gateway sign will not be installed until the Washington Project has been finalized, the Petitioner is seeking a variance to this provision to extend the effective period of the variance.

North Central College has been working closely with the City on an agreement to allow use of the subject property for staging activities during the reconstruction. Therefore, the Petitioner will not have the ability to make improvements to the property, including installing the gateway sign, until the Washington Project has been finalized. Staff does not have any concerns with extending the effective period of the variance finding this flexibility is necessary in order to allow the Petitioner to install the desired improvement. Staff recommends approval of the variance to extend the effective period until the Washington Project reconstruction has been completed. The City will continue to work closely with the Petitioner for the duration of the Project.

Findings of Fact

The Petitioner's responses to the Standards for Granting a Variance can be found in the attachments. Upon review, staff and the PZC agree with the Petitioner's Findings and recommend their adoption by the City Council.

Planning and Zoning Commission Review

The PZC held a public hearing for PZC 22-1-047 on July 6, 2022. No members of the public provided testimony on the request. The PZC asked the petitioner why the request is being submitted now instead of waiting until the structure can be installed following the Washington Street Bridge Replacement Project. Kathleen West, Dommermuth Cobine West Gensler Philipchuck & Corrigan, Ltd., Attorney for Petitioner, clarified that processing the variance at this time will confirm that the structure can be incorporated into the park plans at the property. The PZC closed the public hearing and provided a positive recommendation on the request (approved 8,0).

Key Takeaways

- The Owner and Petitioner, North Central College, is seeking variances to construct a gateway sign on the property located at 430 S. Washington Street.

- Provide a recommendation on the requested variances to Section 6-16-6:3 and Section 6-3-6:4.1 to permit signage on an accessory structure and to extend the effective period of the variance. Staff and the PZC are in support of the requested variances.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A