File #: 21-1078B, **Version:** 1

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

ACTION REQUESTED:
Pass the ordinance approving a sign variance from Title 6 (Zoning Regulations), Chapter 16 (Signs) Section 6:1 (Special Areas of Control: Educational Campus) to permit four wall signs on the building located at 160 E Chicago Avenue (NCC) - PZC 21-1-093

DEPARTMENT: Transportation, Engineering and Development

SUBMITTED BY: Gabrielle Mattingly, Community Planner

BOARD/COMMISSION REVIEW:
The Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) considered PZC 21-1-093 on August 18, 2021 and recommended approval of the request (6,0). Staff concurs.

BACKGROUND:
The subject property is zoned CU (College/University District) and is located south of Chicago Avenue, east of Washington Street at the perimeter of the North Central College (NCC) campus. The owner and Petitioner, NCC, has recently completed construction of a new academic building, the Health Sciences & Engineering Building (HSE Building), and wishes to install wall signage on all four sides of the building.

DISCUSSION:
Given the building is located within the NCC campus, the educational campus sign regulations are applicable to wall signs installed on the building. These regulations include a maximum permitted wall sign allowance of 32 square feet per frontage of the building. The Sign Code regulations define frontage as, “a strip or extension of land abutting a public or private roadway (excluding drive aisles).” Specific to the new academic building, the allowable wall signage is one, 32 square foot wall sign, placed on the northern façade facing Chicago Avenue.

The building is uniquely located on the edge of the NCC campus, visible from Washington Street, and is in close proximity to the River Square commercial shopping center. As such, the Petitioner does not find that the allowable wall signage, either in allowable sign size or number of permitted signs, provides adequate identification of the building. The Petitioner is requesting a variance in order to install four wall signs, one per façade with the following sign sizes:

North and South Facades	71.6 square feet
West Façade	147.6 square feet
East Façade	86.6 square feet

The proposed signs are non-illuminated, cast-metal lettering signs with a black gloss finish. The wall signs include North Central College, the NCC logo, the donor name, and identify that the building is the Center for Health Sciences and Engineering building. The building and entrances are on the north and south facades are visible from Washington Street and Chicago Avenue.

Staff finds the proposed wall signs are proportionate to the HSE building and with minimal impact given their non-illuminated design. While only the Chicago façade qualifies for signage, staff finds that the location and orientation of this building (i.e., visible from Washington, the stadium, and the NCC campus to the east) supports the request by NCC to place signage on the three remaining building facades. Overall, staff finds that the proposed signage provides proper identification of the building within the NCC campus.

Response to Standards
The Petitioner has provided a response to the Standards for a Variance which can be found in the attachments. Staff and the PZC are in general agreement with the Petitioner's findings and recommend adoption.

Planning and Zoning Commission Review
The PSC considered PZC 21-1-093 on August 18, 2021. No members of the public provided testimony on the request. Chairman Hanson spoke in support of the request. The PZC closed the public hearing and recommended approval (approved 6,0). Staff concurs.

Key Takeaways

- The owner and Petitioner, NCC requests approval of variance to Section 6-16-6:1 of the Municipal Code in order to install one wall sign per façade on the new academic building located at 160 E. Chicago Avenue.
- Staff is in support of the sign variance request finding the signs adequately identify the building as part of the NCC campus and are proportionate to the building.

FISCAL IMPACT:
N/A