



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND INSPECTIONS
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Board of Zoning Appeals

Staff Report

TYPE OF APPLICATION:	Major Variance	FILE #: DSIBZA-000232-2025
APPLICANT:	Joe Bennett	
HEARING DATE:	February 2, 2026	
LOCATION:	1305 7th Street West	
LEGAL DESCRIPTION:	CLARKE'S ADDITION EX VICTORIA AND 7TH STS LOTS 16 AND LOT 17 BLK 8	
PLANNING DISTRICT:	9	
PRESENT ZONING:	B2	
ZONING CODE REFERENCE:	§ 64.405	
DATE RECEIVED:	December 21, 2025	
REPORT DATE:	January 29, 2026	
DEADLINE FOR ACTION:	March 16, 2026	BY: Kaozouapang Yang

- A. **PURPOSE:** The applicant proposes to convert an existing lit, freestanding sign to a dynamic display sign, keeping it in its current location. The zoning code requires dynamic display signs to be 75 feet measured along the road from residential districts and 50 ft from residential districts measured radially; 50 and 47 feet are proposed, for variances of 25 and 3 feet, respectively.
- B. **SITE AND AREA CONDITIONS:** This is a 0.1363 sq ft parcel on the corner of 7th Street West and Victoria Street South.

The surrounding land uses and zoning include:

- Medium-Density Multiple-Family Residential (RM2)
- Residential (H2)
- Traditional Neighborhood (T2)

- C. **ZONING CODE CITATION:**
Sec. 64.405(a) - Location and orientation. Business signs with dynamic display shall be at least seventy-five (75) feet, as measured along the road, from a residential district, and shall be at least fifty (50) feet from a residential district, measured radially. Signs with dynamic display intended to be read from a freeway shall be at least six hundred sixty (660) feet as measured along the

freeway from any other sign with dynamic display designed to be read by drivers heading in the same direction. Signs with dynamic display shall not interfere with traffic and road safety due to placement and orientation as determined by the city traffic engineer.

Sec. 64.207. - Variances.

Applications for variance from the strict enforcement of the provisions of this chapter shall be filed and reviewed according to the provisions in chapter 61, administration and enforcement. In addition to the requirements for variances in section 61.601, the applicant shall demonstrate that such variance is needed due to unusual conditions pertaining to sign needs for a specific building or lot, and that the sign would not create a hazard, would not be objectionable to adjacent property owners, would not adversely affect residential property through excessive glare and lighting, and would be in keeping with the general character of the surrounding area.

D. FINDINGS:

1. The variance is in harmony with the general purposes and intent of the zoning code.

The applicant proposes to convert an existing lit, freestanding sign to a dynamic display sign, keeping it in its current location. The zoning code requires dynamic display signs to be 75 feet measured along the road from residential districts and 50 ft from residential districts measured radially; 50 and 47 feet are proposed, for variances of 25 and 3 feet, respectively.

This applicant's request conforms to the provisions of Section 64.207, the findings necessary for sign variances, as follows:

a. The variance is due to unusual conditions pertaining to sign needs for a specific building or lot.

The corner-lot configuration and existing building placement limit standard sign placement. The proposal replaces existing signage to provide necessary business identification consistent with the area. **This finding is met.**

b. The sign would not create a hazard.

The sign will be installed by a licensed contractor and poses no safety hazard to the immediate area or the public. **This finding is met.**

c. The sign would not be objectionable to adjacent property owners.

No objections to this request have been raised by adjacent property owners. **This finding is met.**

d. The sign would not adversely affect residential property though excessive glare and lighting.

The sign will be monochromatic, static (changing no more than every 20 minutes), and turned off between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. This minimizes potential glare and lighting

impacts on nearby residential properties. **This finding is met.**

- e. The sign is in keeping with the general character of the surrounding area.*

The proposed sign is consistent in scale, placement, and appearance with other business signage in the surrounding area. **This finding is met.**

- 2. The variance is consistent with the comprehensive plan.*

The request aligns with Policy LU-6 of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and the District 9 Area Plan Summary, which support businesses that enhance neighborhood services. The proposed sign will increase visibility, attract patrons, and stimulate local economic activity. **Therefore, this finding is met.**

- 3. The applicant has established that there are practical difficulties in complying with the provision, that the property owner proposes to use the property in a reasonable manner not permitted by the provision. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.*

The applicant has demonstrated practical difficulties in complying with the current signage provision. The property is uniquely located in a B2 (commercial) district that is surrounded by residential districts. This condition limits the options for updating the signage in a manner consistent with other commercial properties, which are typically located in fully commercial corridors.

The proposed use of the property is reasonable. The request is justified by these specific, site-related constraints and not by economic considerations alone, which do not constitute a valid practical difficulty. **Therefore, this finding is met.**

- 4. The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner.*

The landowner's plight originates from the property's unique circumstance, a B2-zoned lot surrounded by residential districts. As this situation is not attributable to the owner, **the finding is met.**

- 5. The variance will not permit any use that is not allowed in the zoning district where the affected land is located.*

The zoning code allows signage in all districts. **This finding is met.**

- 6. The variance will not alter the essential character of the surrounding area.*

The proposed sign is consistent with the other signs in the area and will not change the commercial character of the area. **This finding is met.**

received a comment from District 9.

F. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Staff have not received any correspondence regarding this request.

G. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on findings 1 through 6, staff recommend approval of the requested variance.