

**Zoning Board of Appeals
July 27, 2022 Regular Meeting**

STAFF REPORT

Subject: ZBA 22-2014; 3365 Washtenaw Ave

Summary:

Kevin Deters, Metro Detroit Signs, is requesting relief from Section 5.24.5B(2) Height, Placement, and Number to allow two wall signs on the south and west side of the building to exceed the allowed height requirement of 20 feet for wall signs. The applicants are seeking a 10-foot variance to allow the two wall signs to be installed 30 feet above grade. The site, also known as Chalmers Place, is zoned C3, Fringe Commercial District.

Background:

The Chalmers Place Retail site was approved in 2005 for a 26,237-square foot office/retail building, which was subsequently constructed. A proposal to rezone the vacant lot to the north from residential to parking was recommended for denial at the May, 2012 City Planning Commission meeting and was subsequently withdrawn by the petitioner.

Description:

The petitioner proposes to install wall signs on the south and west elevations of the existing building exceeding the 20 feet height limitation on the building. The two signs will instead be 30 feet above grade.

Standards for Approval- Variance

The Zoning Board of Appeals has all the power granted by State law and by Section 5.29.12, Application of the Variance Power from the UDC. The following criteria shall apply:

- (a). *That the practical difficulties are exceptional and peculiar to the property of the person requesting the variance and result from conditions which do not exist generally throughout the City.***

Sign E02, on the south elevation, will be replacing an existing sign like for like. It is essential for both wall signs E02 and E07 to be installed higher on the building for increased visibility.

- (b). *That the practical difficulties will result from a failure to grant the variance, include substantially more than mere inconvenience, inability to attain a higher financial return, or both.***

This property is unique in that the existing building is 3 stories high. Citizens Bank would like to put wall signage at the top of the building for better visibility.

- (c). ***That allowing the variance will result in substantial justice being done, considering the public benefits intended to be secured by this Chapter, the individual hardships that will be suffered by a failure of the Board to grant a variance, and the rights of others whose property would be affected by the allowance of the variance.***

This variance is being requested because Citizens Bank wants signs at the top of the building rather than two thirds up on the building.

- (d). ***That the conditions and circumstances on which the variance request is based shall not be a self- imposed hardship or practical difficulty.***

This variance, if granted, will not have a negative impact on surrounding properties. We are asking to install wall signs on the existing building. Both signs are small. Sign E02 (south elevation) is 16 sq. feet, and sign E07 (west elevation) is 15.08 sq. feet. Therefore, neither wall sign would create an eyesore or act as a traffic or safety hazard.

- (e). ***A variance approved shall be the minimum variance that will make possible a reasonable use of the land or structure.***

The need for this variance was not created by Citizens Bank or the property owner. We are asking to install signs on the existing building. The sign code was changed in December 2020, and it no longer allows sign higher than 20 feet on the building.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Cheng

Chris Cheng -
City Planner