

**City of Bloomington Planning Department
Formal DRC Review Project Narrative
Alpha B Site, Bloomington, MN**

March 4, 2015

Recently plans were submitted for the "Alpha B" mixed use development in the South Loop District. This dynamic project meets the City's desire for a dense mixed-use development with strong architectural character. During the course of design and the subsequent review by City Staff it became apparent that due to some uniquely designed and iconic signs proposed for this new development greater flexibility in sign regulations is necessary.

We are requesting a Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment that would allow a Master Sign Plan process to be in place for the South Loop District where this project is located. A Master Sign Plan will allow the City to permit greater flexibility to the sign standards for the number, size, location and type of signs for our site and all sites within the South Loop District Plan area. Creating this option, based on a district location, affords the City discretion over the master sign package, while allowing for some unique signs within a special district rather than city wide.

The South Loop District is a unique urban district that is evolving into a trendy, dense, mixed-use neighborhood that has great access and visibility. Unique neighborhoods like this call for architecture, design features and iconic expressions of urban lifestyles. The proposed "Alpha B" mixed use development will meet and exceed these standards. While many codes are in place to ensure the level of quality and sustainable design; some of the more unique architectural features that can be represented through signage have not yet been considered. This ordinance amendment will allow consideration of a master sign plan package in the South Loop District. This will further the creative energy and result in high quality sign package for the "Alpha B" proposals and future developments as the City continues expansion of the South Loop District and unique neighborhoods within it.

Within the "Alpha B" development plan and specifically design plans for the AC Hotel by Marriott Hotel, signage is considered to be a critical elements to the project's success. The South Loop Plan in 2011 outlined the desire to achieve a "unique character" and to represent a more "urban" vs. "suburban" feel within a "human scaled" neighborhood. We think we've achieved that aesthetic but this achievement requires increased sign flexibility in our overall sign package. In exchange for flexibility, through the master sign plan, the development accommodates some site aesthetics strongly desired by the City such as pushing the hotel away from the corner to accommodate the public plaza. Our signage analysis is attached for your review and we appreciate your consideration and interest in advancing the unique character of South Loop.

Some unique sign elements we desire to include in a future master sign plan include a roof top sign. The proposed 4-sided rooftop "cube" sign is the "premiere" identifying and signature signage prescribed by the hotel brand. It is an iconic sign and the most unifying element amongst the brand's hotels around the world. It also fits within the unique design features sought by the City for the South Loop District.

Other signs that will be part of our future master sign package are the Porte Cochere Sign, canopy sign and identifying wall signs in key locations that exceed maximums allowed by ordinance.

Our final master sign package will also consider freestanding development signs and signage for future uses within the "Alpha B" development. Creating a master sign plan will provide a mechanism to achieve the artistic and iconic sign quality while providing the City an appropriate tool for review for future signs in this dynamic and exciting South Loop District. City staff has been supportive in this request and provided proposed ordinance text language that we respectfully request be submitted to allow master sign plans in the South Loop District.

Section 2. That Chapter 21 of the City Code is hereby amended by deleting those words that are contained in brackets [] and adding those words that are underlined, to read as follows:

CHAPTER 21

ZONING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT

ARTICLE V. ADMINISTRATION AND NONCONFORMITY

Division A. Approvals and Permits

SEC. 21.501.06. MASTER SIGN PLAN.

- (b) **Where Applicable.** The master sign plan process is available only within the Class VI Sign District South Loop District (area east of TH 77) as defined by the Bloomington Comprehensive Plan. Applicants located within the South Loop District seeking significant flexibility from the City sign regulations [of the Class VI Sign District] must use the master sign plan application process.

- (f) **Standards.** Master sign plans must meet the following standards:

- (2) Signs are limited to one or more of the following functions:
- (A) Tenant identification.
 - (B) On-site advertising.
 - (C) Arts-related.
 - (D) Events.
 - (E) Public service announcement.
 - (F) Other signs as referenced in the respective Sign District regulations. ~~[under Section 19.115(d)]~~

Passed and adopted this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Mayor

ATTEST:

Secretary to the Council

APPROVED:

City Attorney