



City of Seattle

Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Application Number: 3010419
Applicant Name: Jim Minor; The Sign Factory
Address of Proposal: 301 Northeast 103rd Street

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

Land Use Application to allow two signs with a 96 sq. ft. face mounted on a commercial structure a maximum of 37 ft. above grade in a commercial zone. One sign facing NE 103rd St and one sign facing 3rd Ave NE.

The following approval is required:

Special Exception – to allow the two multi-tenant signs to be wall mounted projecting signs instead of the free standing pole signs as normally permitted in SMC 23.55.030D.c.2.



SEPA DETERMINATION: Exempt DNS MDNS EIS
 DNS with conditions
 DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition, or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

BACKGROUND DATA

Site and Vicinity Description

Thornton Place is a new development located in the Northgate area, south of Northgate Mall. The new development occupies the majority of the superblock bounded by 3rd Avenue NE, 5th Avenue

NE, NE 103rd Street and NE 100th Streets. The site includes several three to six-story mixed-use, commercial, and residential buildings, reviewed under Master Use Permit #2401519.

The proposed multi-tenant signage would be located on the development's primary building at the northwest corner of 3rd Ave NE & NE 103rd St. The building includes a parking garage and five tenant spaces, in addition to the Regal Cinemas Movie Theater. Additional retail spaces are located on the ground floor of the residential buildings along NE Thornton Place (the internal circulation drive). The westerly portion of the Thornton Place development, including the building proposed for the multi-tenant signs, is zoned NC3-125 (Neighborhood Commercial with a 125' height limit). This zoning continues to the north and west, while the zoning directly to the south is NC3-85. The easterly portion of the development is zoned NC3-85. Properties to the north and south of this are zoned NC3-65. Development in the vicinity consists of commercial and residential uses.

Proposal Description

Each of the two proposed multi-tenant signs is a three sided, internally illuminated metal cabinet measuring 16' tall by 6' wide by 3' deep. The left and right cabinet faces (3' x 16', or 48 s. f. each) will have aluminum faces with routed graphics designating, "Parking," on one side and "Thornton Place" on the other side; while the front cabinet face (6' by 16', or 96 s. f.) will have a lexan face with four dividers, allowing for future graphics for 5 tenants. Each sign would be mounted at a distance of 21' above grade and extend to 37' above grade. They would project 3' 6" from the face of the building.

The signs are proposed to be located as follows:

Sign 1 – Near the Southwest corner of the building, adjacent to the driveway entrance on 3rd Avenue NE, mounted to the west face of the building.

Sign 2 – On the Northeast corner of the building near the driveway entrance on NE 103rd Street, mounted to the north face of the building.

SMC 23.55.030 regulates signs in NC3 zones. The proposed sign is an internally illuminated projecting sign. The code allows a multiple business center to have one multi-tenant sign for each 300 lineal feet of street frontage, or portion thereof. The subject building occupies substantial frontage on two streets (about 250' on 3rd Avenue and 200 feet on NE 103rd Street), so would allow for two multi-tenant signs. The maximum size allowed for each face of a multi-tenant sign is 300 s. f. and the signs are well within this limit.

However, the code only provides for free-standing multi-tenant sign, not building-mounted signage. Thus, the proposed signage requires a special exception.

Public Comment

Notice of the application was issued on September 24th, 2009. The comment period ended October 7, 2009. No written comments were received.

ANALYSIS – SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Pursuant to the requirements of SMC Section 23.55.040, the Director may authorize exceptions to the size, number, height, and depth of projection of on-premises signs. In order for the Director to approve a special exception the proposed project must meet one codified condition and must exhibit at least one codified desired characteristic.

Special Exception Criteria

Conditions and desired characteristics are codified in SMC Sections 23.55.040.A and 23.55.040.B, respectively. The response to conditions and characteristics are summarized below. Codified conditions and characteristics are italicized.

A. Conditions.

- 1. The proposed sign plan shows an exceptional effort toward creating visual harmony among signs, desirable streetscape features, building facades and other architectural elements of the building structure through the use of a consistent design theme;*

A master plan for exterior signage at Thornton place has been developed by the applicant. The style of the development with buildings built near the property line does not leave room for multi-tenant freestanding pole signs. The proposed projecting sign design is more in keeping with the architectural character of the development and allows the signs to be close to the street and sidewalk where they are viewable by vehicles and pedestrians, as well as contributing the streetscape and building façade.

The master plan includes a roof sign, “Thornton Place” as well as the “Regal Cinema” projecting sign, and the two multi-tenant signs proposed as part of this application. Several of these signs were included in the design review drawings with MUP #2401519. The signage plan shows an effort to create visual harmony between the signs, streetscape and building facades. These primary signs nicely frame the structure, blending with the masonry detailing, storefront windows, metal framing and other materials of the façade. The aluminum cabinet will be painted silver to match the building framing.

The overall signage plan coordinates with architectural elements of the building structure to create a consistent design theme. While the complex includes several retail spaces internal to the complex in addition to the spaces in the primary building, the sign only has room for five tenants. The developer’s thought is that the signage will be most important initially, to give the anchor tenant and initial businesses in the complex visibility. As the residential development fills up, and the public starts to frequent the theatre and initial retail, the complex will generate enough foot traffic that signage visible from the street for the smaller retail tenants will be less important.

B. Desired Characteristics. All the following desired characteristics shall be used to evaluate applications for a special exception, and at least one (1) must be met. The proposed sign(s):

- 1. Unifies the project as a whole or contributes positively to a comprehensive building and tenant signage plan;*

The proposed sign is consistent with the tenant signage plan.

- 2. Is compatible with the building facade and scale of building in terms of size, height and location;*

The proposed sign measures 16' tall and projects 3.5 feet from the face of the building. This fits with the scale of the building, which is roughly 100' tall. The placement of the sign starting at 21' and extending to 37' above ground provides visibility from a distance while not being out of scale with the streetscape and pedestrian environment. Individual tenants will have their own building façade signage which will be more oriented to pedestrians as they walk along the sidewalk in front of the building.

- 3. Adds interest to the street level environment, while also identifying upper level businesses;*

The proposed sign identifies some of the street level businesses within the development. Its placement adds to the street level environment on 3rd Ave NE and NE 103rd Streets, as well as being visible from further away.

- 4. Helps orient pedestrians and motorists at street-level in the vicinity of the subject building;*

The sign would be visible from 3rd Ave NE and NE 103rd Streets. The location of the signs near the main entrances to the internal circulation roads is appropriate and will help orient pedestrians and motorists to the location of parking and tenants in the buildings.

- 5. Integrates support fixtures, conduits, wiring, switches and other mounting apparatus into the building architecture to the extent feasible.*

The projecting signs are internally illuminated box signs mounted with brackets into the upper parking garage levels. The electrical wiring to illuminate the signage would be located within the support structure for the sign, and connected to the electrical system of the building, not visible from the street level.

DECISION – SPECIAL EXCEPTION

Approved.

CONDITIONS

None.

Signature: _____ (signature on file) Date: October 19, 2009
Holly E. Anderson, Land Use Planner II
Department of Planning and Development

HEA:bg