

# CITY OF BLOOMINGTON



November 5, 2025 @ 2:00 p.m.  
Kelly Conference Room #155 and Zoom

Virtual Link:

<https://bloomington.zoom.us/j/88225451589?pwd=SkQxQmQvTnBXc202M0ZPano1eW9rdz09>

Meeting ID: 882 2545 1589  
Passcode: 897298

**CITY OF BLOOMINGTON  
HEARING OFFICER (Hybrid Meeting)  
November 5, 2025 at 2:00 p.m.**

**City Hall, 401 N. Morton Street  
Kelly Conference Room #155**

❖Virtual Link:  
<https://bton.in/xRLRA>

**Meeting ID: 882 2545 1589      Passcode: 897298**

**Petition Map: <https://bton.in/G6BiA>**

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

October 22, 2025

**PETITIONS:**

V-47-25 / ZR2025-10-0102

**The Dimension Mill (John Fernandez)**  
617 N. Madison Street  
Parcel: 53-05-33-200-013.002-005; 53-05-32-100-035.002-005  
Request: Variance from Sign Standards for location and size for a tenant in the Mixed-Use Downtown – Showers Technology (MD-ST) zoning district.  
Case Manager: Jackie Scanlan

**Hearing Officer Member:**

<u>Member</u>	<u>Appointed By</u>	<u>Term</u>
Ryan Robling	Plan Commission	10/11/2022-Current

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**HEARING OFFICER –Kelly Conference Room #155**  
**October 22, 2025 @ 2:00 p.m. - Record of Meeting**

The Hearing Officer meeting was held on Wednesday, October 22, 2025 in the Kelly Conference Room #155 and on Zoom. Hearing Officer present: Ryan Robling

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

July 30, 2025

**Robling made a motion to continue the minutes to the next meeting.**

**PETITIONS:**

CU-46-25/ ZR2025-10-0101

**Gable's Bagels**

200 E. Kirkwood Avenue

Parcel: 53-05-33-310-227.000-005

Request: Conditional Use for a Standardized Business in the Mixed-Use University Village Downtown Character Overlay (MD-UV). Case Manager: Joe Patterson

Joe Patterson, case manager, presented CU-46-25. See meeting packet for more detail. The department recommends that the Hearing Officer adopt the proposed findings and approve CU-46-25 with the following conditions:

1. This conditional use approval is limited to the uses and design as submitted. Minor changes to the sign size, façade design, such as refacing of signs or change of sign graphics within the allowed signage area, can be approved as consistent with this conditional use approval, subject to sign standards and other design criteria in place at time of future application.
2. This approval allows for the placement of wall signage along the Kirkwood frontage only.

Nancy Baldwin, petitioner, presented her request for conditional use approval.

Eric Greulich, Development Services Manager, wanted to add a third conditional of approval stating that a Certificate of Appropriateness is required prior to the issuance of a sign permit.

**Robling made a motion to approve CU-46-25 with the following amended conditions of approval:**

1. This conditional use approval is limited to the uses and design as submitted. Minor changes to the sign size, façade design, such as refacing of signs or change of sign graphics within the allowed signage area, can be approved as consistent with this conditional use approval, subject to sign standards and other design criteria in place at time of future application.
2. This approval allows for the placement of wall signage along the Kirkwood frontage only.
3. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required prior to the issuance of a sign permit.

Meeting adjourned 2:12 P.M.

**BLOOMINGTON HEARING OFFICER  
STAFF REPORT  
Location: 617 N Madison Street**

**CASE #: V-47-25  
DATE: November 5, 2025**

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**PETITIONER:** The Dimension Mill (The Mill, John Fernandez)  
642 N Madison Street, Bloomington

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**REQUEST:** Variance from Sign Standards for location and size for a tenant.

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**REPORT:** This roughly 0.47 acre property is located at 617 N Madison Street / 431 W Maker Way and is zoned Mixed-Use Downtown in the Showers Technology Downtown Character Overlay (MD-ST). The property currently contains 'The Forge', a three-story multi-tenant office building. The property is currently surrounded by vacant property to the north, west, and south, with a parking lot to the east and the Dimension Mill to the northeast.

Per Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Section 20.04.100(l)(2)(A)(ii)(2), in the MD zoning district, first floor tenants in multi-tenant centers are allowed signage not to exceed one and one-half square feet per lineal foot of the use's façade width facing a street. The upper story tenants in the MD zoning district shall be permitted a wall sign allowance equal to 50 percent of that allowed for first floor tenants. In this instance, the second story tenant space has 36 lineal feet that faces Madison Street. As a result, the maximum allowable square footage for the signage for this lease space is 27 square feet. The portion of the lease space that faces Madison Street is almost entirely glass, limiting visible locations for the signage on the lease space.

The petitioner is requesting a variance from the size and location standards for signs for a tenant on the second floor of the building to allow for a 50 square foot sign on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor façade of the building facing Madison Street.

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**CRITERIA AND FINDINGS FOR DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS VARIANCE**

**20.06.080(b)(3)(E) Standards for Granting Variances from Development Standards:**

A variance from the development standards of the Unified Development Ordinance may be approved only upon determination in writing that each of the following criteria is met:

- 1) *The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community.*

**(Sign Size) PROPOSED FINDING:** The granting of the variance will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community. Allowing a larger sign at this location will have no negative impacts on the community, as it will be 3 stories from the ground and is appropriate relative to the size of the building.

**(Sign Location) PROPOSED FINDING:** The granting of the variance will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals, and general welfare of the community. Allowing a sign to be located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor near the lease space will not have negative

impacts on the community, and will allow greater visibility to the public of what businesses are in the building.

- 2) *The use and value of the area adjacent to the property included in the Development Standards Variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.*

**(Sign Size) PROPOSED FINDING:** No adverse impacts to the use and value of surrounding properties as a result of the requested variance are found. The proposed signage is proportionate relative to the size of the building and will not detract from the only adjacent property developed with a building, which is across Madison Street to the northeast and owned by the petitioner.

**(Sign Location) PROPOSED FINDING:** No adverse impacts to the use and value of surrounding properties as a result of the requested variance are found. The proposed signage is proportionate relative to the size of the building and will not detract from the only adjacent property developed with a building, which is across Madison Street to the northeast and owned by the petitioner.

- 3) *The strict application of the terms of the Unified Development Ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property; that the practical difficulties are peculiar to the property in question; that the Development Standards Variance will relieve the practical difficulties.*

**(Sign Size) PROPOSED FINDING:** The Department finds that the strict application of the terms of the UDO will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property as it would not allow an appropriately sized sign for this roughly 4,600+ square foot lease space. While only 36 lineal feet of the lease space face Madison Street, the lease space is roughly 130 feet deep. The practical difficulties are peculiar to this property because of the orientation of the building. The similar lease space on the north side of the building on the second floor allows a 100 square foot sign because it has frontage along Maker's Way. The proposed sign size is half the size of that allowable sign, and is appropriate for the scale of this building.

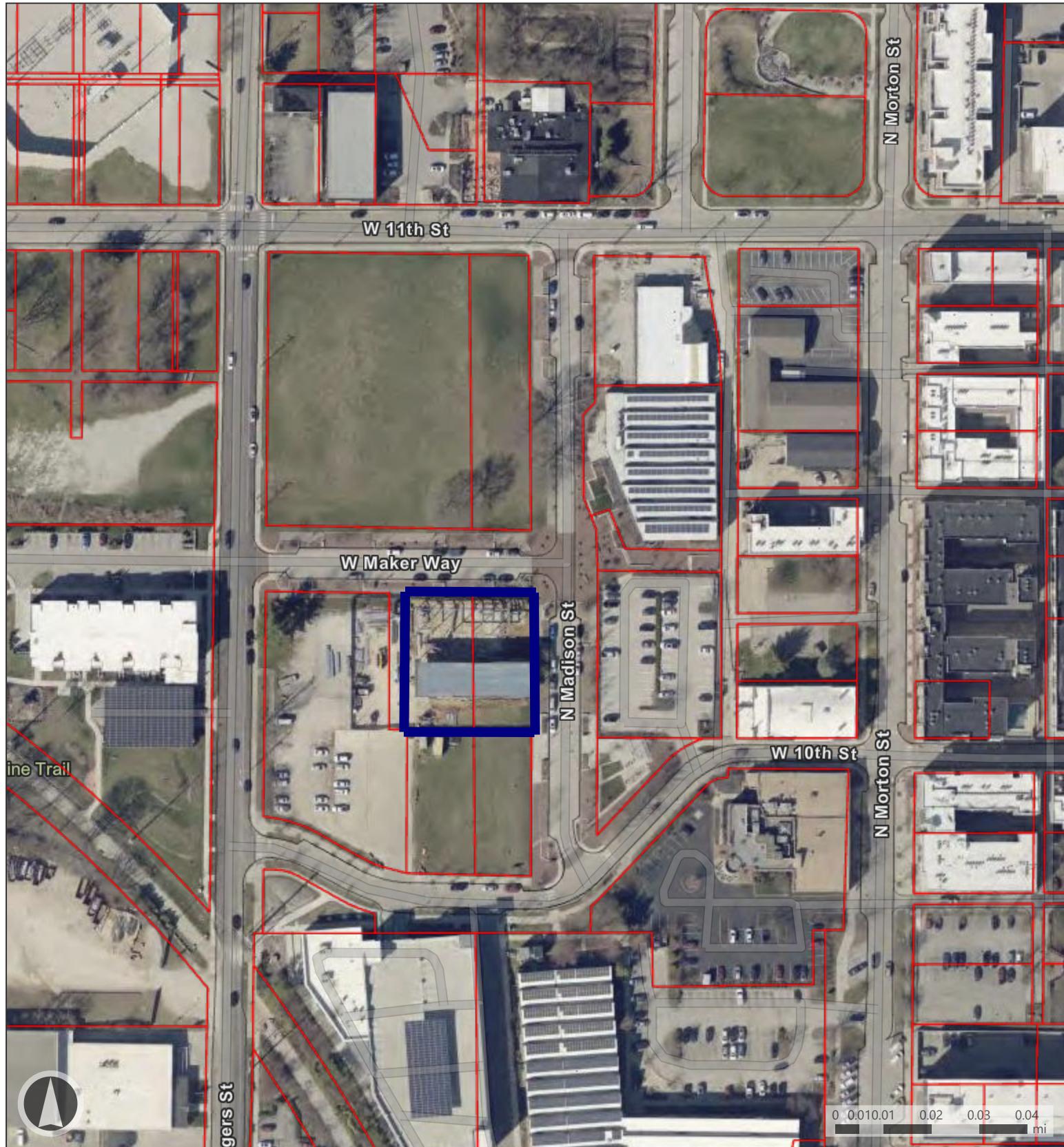
**(Sign Location) PROPOSED FINDING:** The Department finds that the strict application of the terms of the UDO will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property as it would not allow appropriate visibility for this lease space, which is the purpose of signage. The practical difficulties are peculiar to this property because of the building orientation, materials, and known future adjacent uses. The side of the lease space that faces Madison Street is primarily glass, limiting potential signage locations on that façade. There is a petition currently before the Plan Commission for a four-story hotel that would be to the west and south of the lease space, blocking view of the building from the nearby roadways. There is a small area on the north façade of the lease space where a sign could be placed, however because it only faces the building courtyard, it does not provide for appropriate visibility. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor location requested will allow for visibility of the signage, and is

located on a portion of the building that will not house a tenant, so will not require competing signage.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Department recommends that the Hearing Officer adopt the proposed findings and approve V-47-25 with the following condition:

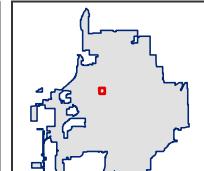
1. This approval allows one wall sign to a maximum of 50 square feet to be located in the red highlighted portion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor east-facing façade, as shown in the Petitioner's Statement Exhibit A. All other elements of the sign must meet UDO requirements or receive additional variances.



**Map Legend**

- Red square: Parcels
- Grey line: Pavement

- Grey line: Alley
- Blue square: Bloomington Municipal Boundary



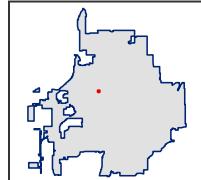


Map Legend

 Parcels

 Pavement

 Bloomington Municipal Boundary





October 15, 2025

Jacqueline Scanlan  
 City of Bloomington Planning and Transportation Department  
 401 N. Morton Street, Suite 130  
 Bloomington, IN 47404

Subject: The Forge exterior sign variance request

Dear Ms. Scanlan:

The Dimension Mill, Inc. (“The Mill”) manages The Forge, a multi-tenant office building owned by the City of Bloomington’s Redevelopment Commission. Located at 617 N. Morton Street, The Forge is a ~21,000sf new construction office building that opened in November 2024. This property is located in the Trades District – a 12-acre sub-area of Bloomington’s Certified Technology Park.

#### **Certified Technology Park Vision**

“Bloomington’s downtown **Certified Technology Park** will be a sought-after model of modern, sustainable urban redevelopment that **nurtures creativity and entrepreneurship** among its citizens and workforce, helps **brand Bloomington** as a **lively tech sector hub, attracts private investment, employment and visitors**, and provides welcoming living options for Bloomingtonians.” Master Plan and Redevelopment Strategy | Certified Technology Park (2013)

The real estate is zoned MD-ST, Mixed-use Downtown Showers Technology District within the Downtown Overlay.

The City of Bloomington commissioned StudioAxis for the building’s design and sought a modern design that would incorporate sustainable features. The site plan approvals sought by the City of Bloomington did not include a building and/or tenant signage package. The design of the building creates unique challenges for the placement of wall signs due to the storefront glass structures on the east side of the building (facing N. Madison Street). Therefore, The Mill respectfully requests a variance from the Bloomington UDO Chapter 20.04.100(I)(2)(A)(ii)(2) signage standards. There are two elements of this variance request:

##### 1. Sign placement

The UDO generally requires that upper story wall signs be located on the tenants’ lease space or along a wall within five feet of the lease space. As noted above, the eastside of The Forge is primarily glass and limits the availability of options for wall signs on the



upper floors. The south or north facing walls adjacent to the tenant sign we intend to install, will have limited visibility.

As an alternative, The Mill proposes a sign placement variance that will enable us to utilize the third floor east-facing wall. See Exhibit A. The third floor does not include any leasable office space, rather it includes common area meeting spaces for tenants use.

## 2. Sign dimensions

Here too, the unique design of The Forge creates challenges for effective wall sign dimensions. The upper floor suites have much larger east/west widths compared to the north/south dimensions. Strict application of the UDO standards would limit the maximum size of our tenant's wall sign to ~27sf. If The Forge's east/west façade was the basis for the wall sign calculation, a materially larger sign would be permitted.

Exhibit B depicts the proposed sign design and placement. The original sign dimension shared with you and depicted in Exhibit B measures 73sf. We are requesting a variance to permit a wall sign that does not exceed 50sf.

The provided findings of facts for each variance listed above are summarized below using the three criteria:

**A) The approval will not be injurious to the public health, safety, morals and general welfare of the community.**

Directly to the east of The Forge is The Mill and a surface parking lot. Further to east on N. Morton Street, there are multi-family mixed used buildings. The Forge represents a significant public investment supporting Bloomington's innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem. The building is positioned to provide a signal to the market that tech-forward companies can effectively launch and scale in Bloomington. Tenant wall signage can be an effective market signal, but only if that signage has effective visibility.

**B) The use and value of the areas adjacent to the property included in the variance will not be affected in a substantially adverse manner.**

As part of an intended, higher density / urban innovation district, effective wall signage with tenant logos will actually provide a positive economic impact for the adjacent properties.



**C) The strict application of the terms of the zoning ordinance will result in practical difficulties in the use of the property.**

As noted in the background on the project above, the unique design of The Forge creates practical difficulties when strictly applying the UDO's signage standards.

The proposed variances, for upper floor placement and sign dimensions, in our judgement will improve the overall effectiveness of the City's investment in The Forge without having any negative impacts on adjacent property owners or the greater community.

Thank you for the consideration of this request.

John Fernandez  
CEO  
The Mill



## Exhibit A



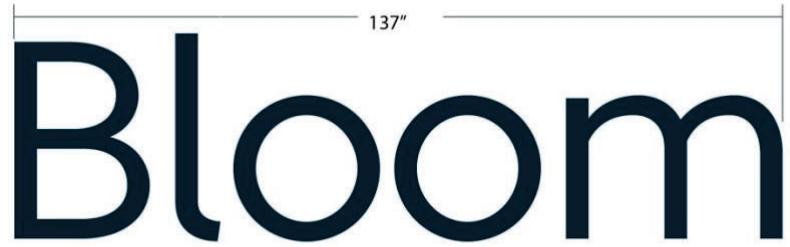
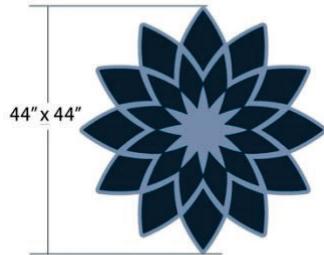
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**THE MILL**  
AMBITION LIVES HERE

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## Exhibit B



73.725sq. ft. sign

