



## CITY OF SAINT PAUL

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND INSPECTIONS  
375 JACKSON STREET, SUITE 220  
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA 55101-1806  
Phone: 651-266-8989 Fax: 651-266-9124  
Visit our Web Site at [www.stpaul.gov/dsi](http://www.stpaul.gov/dsi)

## Board of Zoning Appeals

### Staff Report

**TYPE OF APPLICATION:** Major Variance      **FILE #:** 21-313398

**APPLICANT:** Tumble Fresh (Steve Linn)

**HEARING DATE:** November 15, 2021

**LOCATION:** 1855 Suburban Avenue

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** REGISTERED LAND SURVEY 276 SUBJ TO RDS; THAT PT OF TRACT C LYING WLY OF A L DESC AS COMM AT SW COR SD TRACT C TH N ALONG W L OF SD TRACT C 40 FT TH ELY PARA TO S L OF SD TRACT C 223.13 FT TO POB TH N 0 DEG 32 MIN 40 SEC W 395.42 FT TO THE N L OF SD TRACT

**PLANNING DISTRICT:** 1

**PRESENT ZONING:** T2

**ZONING CODE REFERENCE:** § 64.503(a)(6)

**DATE RECEIVED:** October 14, 2021

**REPORT DATE:** November 10, 2021

**DEADLINE FOR ACTION:** December 12, 2021    **BY:** David Eide

A. **PURPOSE:** The zoning code requires signs with dynamic display in a T2 zoning district to be monochromatic; the applicant is proposing full-color, for a variance of this requirement.

**B. SITE AND AREA CONDITIONS:**

**Surrounding Land Use:**

North: Interstate 94 & Vacant Land (T2)  
East: Commercial (T2)  
South: County Park (R2)  
West: Commercial (T2)

**C. ZONING CODE CITATION:**

**Sec. 64.503. - T1—T4 traditional neighborhood, F1—F6 Ford and OS—BC business districts.**

(a) Business and identification signs:

(6) Dynamic displays shall be monochromatic, shall not scroll or change their displays faster than every twenty (20) minutes, and shall be turned off between 11:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. or after business hours, whichever is later, except that interior window signs six (6) square feet or less in area with only text providing only open/closed information may have more than one (1) color.

**Sec. 64.121. - S.**

Sign. The use of words, numerals, figures, devices, designs or trademarks the purpose of which is to show or advertise a person, firm, profession, business, product or message.

**Sec. 64.104. - B.**

Business sign. A sign which directs attention to a business, profession, commodity, service or entertainment which is conducted, offered, sold or manufactured on the premises upon which the sign is placed. It shall be considered as an accessory sign.

**D. FINDINGS:**

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

The T2 traditional neighborhood district is designed for use in existing or potential pedestrian and transit nodes. Its intent is to foster and support compact, pedestrian-oriented commercial and residential development that, in turn, can support and increase transit usage.

The applicant is proposing to install a full-color dynamic display panel on a freestanding sign on this property. The T2 zoning district has specific standards for dynamic display signs: they must be monochromatic and shall not change their displays faster than every 20 minutes. The applicant is proposing to install a full-color dynamic display.

This request aligns with Section 64.101 of the sign code to protect the right of information transmittal;

This 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.*

This Tumble Fresh laundromat location is a new development, and it is important to provide signage that is clear and readable from the roadways while blending with the existing signage in the neighborhood in relation to size and clarity. **This finding is met.**

- b. *The sign would not create a hazard.*

The sign would be professionally designed and installed. In addition, the applicant is proposing to comply with the 20-minute display frequency and would not change the message or image faster than this time period. It would not create a hazard. **This finding is met.**

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

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

- d. The sign would not adversely affect residential property through excessive glare and lighting.*

This property is not adjacent to residential properties. The applicant indicated that the sign will be on a dimmer switch, so the brightness can be adjusted. **This finding is met.**

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

There are several buildings with identification signs nearby and the proposed freestanding sign and display would match the scale of the building. **This finding is met.**

**This finding is met.**

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

The proposed full-color dynamic display sign would provide greater visibility for a new laundromat. This request is in keeping with the goals of the comprehensive plan policy LU-6 to facilitate business creation, attraction, retention, and expansion. **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 runs a chain of laundromat locations and has graphics that are utilized for many stores. They state that it would be a large cost to re-create this content for a monochromatic display. The applicant also states that full-color images will be easier especially during the winter months at night. **This finding is met.**

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

This is a new development, and a monochromatic dynamic display could be installed by the applicant. The plight of the landowner is due to a circumstance they created, as there is nothing particularly unique about this parcel that warrants permitting a full-color dynamic display. **This finding is not met.**

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

Dynamic display signs are permitted in the T2 zoning district. Granting this variance would not permit a use that is not allowed. **This finding is met.**

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

There are multiple business signs fronting Suburban Avenue. Granting this variance would

not alter the essential character of the surrounding area. **This finding is met.**

- E. **DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:** As of the date of this report, staff have not received a recommendation from District 1 – Southeast Community Organization.
- F. **CORRESPONDENCE:** Staff have received no correspondence regarding this request.
- G. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on finding 4, staff recommend denial of the requested variance.