

March 3, 2026

Community Development
City of Mankato
Intergovernmental Center
10 Civic Center Plaza
Mankato, MN 56001



RE: Variance Narrative - ZONE-0012-26 Front Street Redevelopment

City Community Development team:

ISG is submitting a variance application associated with the Front Street redevelopment project in downtown Mankato for the block bound by S. Riverfront Dr/S Front Street/Warren St / Liberty Street. This variance submittal is in conjunction with the CDC and CUP applications, Project ZONE-0012-26.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The Front Street Place redevelopment site is a block in downtown Mankato that is zoned CBD-F (Central Business District – Fringe) and within the Front Street Connectivity Plan. Last month, our team submitted the Preliminary Plat application to consolidate the 13 parcels on this city block into 1 lot, totaling a size of 2.5 acres (109,036 square feet) to prepare the project area for a new cohesive development on one lot. The Preliminary Plat is currently in review with the city.

Front Street Plaza, LLC is proposing a mixed-use redevelopment project that will include retail, office, residential, and a shared parking facility. A 5-story office building is situated at the corner of Riverfront Drive and Warren Street. The building along Front Street will be six stories. Retail will occupy the first floor with residential on floors 2-6. A private outdoor terrace for residents will be located on the east side of the building. In between the two buildings will be a 3-story parking ramp. There will be direct access from the parking ramp to the residential, office, and café mezzanine.

VARIANCE REQUEST

We are requesting a variance to exceed the Lot Coverage Area by 2%. The code standard is a maximum of 75% lot coverage. This project is proposing a 77% lot coverage. The Mankato City Code defines Lot Coverage as, “the area of the lot covered by buildings or roofed areas, excluding permitted projecting eaves.” Following are the calculations of the proposed project Lot Coverage to show how a variance is needed:

Lot Area = 109,036 SF

Allowable Lot Coverage Area = 75% (81,777 SF)

Proposed Lot Coverage Area = 77% (83,217 SF)

First Floor Building Area = 65% (70,676 SF)

Second Floor Building Area = 64% (69,576 SF)

Following are the Standards from Section 10-883 of the City of Mankato code for the review of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) request. Each standard is listed below verbatim from the city code followed with a response on how this project addresses each CUP standard:

1. In your opinion, is the variance in harmony with the purposes and intent of the ordinance?

Response: The purpose and intent of the ordinance is being upheld with a minor variance request that is a 2% deviation from the code requirement. The ground level Lot Coverage area is compliant so at a pedestrian level, the amount of open space is compliant. The 2% increase is to accommodate additional roof area for upper-level floors

that are architectural enhancements to the building through various bump outs that provide more dimension, interest to the overall site appearance, and pedestrian level areas protected from the weather.

2. In your opinion, is the variance consistent with the comprehensive plan?

Response: This development supports goals for additional housing options where a walkable neighborhood character is being built. It also supports economic development and revitalization downtown. Additionally, this property is located within the Front Street Connectivity Plan and supports the following goals stated in the plan, with the main elements bulleted below:

- *Improve the economic viability, market position, and accessibility of Front Street*
- *Maintain Pedestrian Access through Front Street*
- *Provide parking in expandable parking ramps or within the building itself. Building upwards for commercial, office, residential uses along with parking purposes provides for greater utilization of space and limits the presence of expansive hard-surfaced parking lots. Reducing expansive hard surface parking lots ...*

The proposed development designed the buildings along Front Street as the dominant pedestrian side, with the goal to enhance the streetscape and engage the pedestrian. Surface parking is limited overall, with the majority of parking in a parking ramp. No parking is accessed from Front Street and parking is screened by buildings and not visible to Front Street.

3. In your opinion, does the proposal put property to use in a reasonable manner?

Response: The proposed mix of apartments, office and retail are compatible with adjacent uses and the character of the area, are not uses that pose safety or nuisance issues. The variance is for an additional ~ 1,440 SF of upper-level roof area beyond what is allowed, which is only 2% of a large city-block redevelopment project. Total Project Lot Coverage Area when including upper floors additional roof area (83,217 SF) - Allowable Lot Coverage Area (81,777 SF) = 1,440 SF additional roof area requested through the variance. An additional 2% would not be noticeable with this scale of project.

4. In your opinion, are there circumstances unique to the property?

Response: There are two small slivers of city-owned lots between the ROW and this site's private property which creates unusual and unique right-of-way lines adjacent to the site. These city-owned parcels will be perceived as surface areas included with this project/private property. If you include either of these city-owned parcels to the overall lot area (adjusted lot area), our project would not need a variance. See calculations below.

City Parcel (Riverfront) = 2415 SF / 111,451 SF (Adjusted lot area)

Overall Lot Coverage Area = 83,217 SF 74.7%

City Parcel (Warren) = 2129 SF / 111,165 SF (Adjusted lot area)

Overall Lot Coverage Area = 83,217 SF 74.9%

The right-of-way line along Riverfront Drive is not linear paralleling the street. There is a city-owned parcel for a third of the portion of the property line along Riverfront that jogs into this site area and takes up 2,415 SF of area that will appear as part of this property's lot surface area to the public eye. With this area being included, our project would meet the Lot Coverage Area, being at 74.7% and a variance would not be needed. There is also a small city-owned parcel between the Warren Street ROW and our site, taking 2,129 SF of lot area that would also be perceived as surface area for this project.

5. In your opinion, will the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Response: The building footprint at pedestrian level is well within the city code requirement at 65%, or 10% below the maximum allowed. However, when you add the upper-level roofed areas, it then bumps the project to exceed the Lot

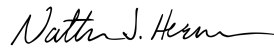
Coverage Area by 2%. This upper-level additional lot coverage area will not be felt at a pedestrian level and provide more architectural building variation and interest.

Thank you again for reviewing the application and attached materials. Please contact us with any questions or if there is any additional information we can provide in support of this project. Andrea Rand is the application coordinator and her contact is Andrea.Rand@ISGInc.com or 952.426.0699. Nate Hermer is the project manager and civil engineer and his contact information is Nathan.Hermer@ISGInc.com or 507-387-6651.

Sincerely,



Andrea Rand, AICP
Development Services Coordinator



Nate Hermer, PE
Project Manager