



architecture specialty millwork virtual vision project management

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Address: 999 50<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421

Zoning District: GB – General Business District

**Narrative**

Property is an existing, vacant commercial building constructed in 1976, consisting of approximately 12,000 square feet on two levels. The previous use of the building prior to vacancy was a dental office. The owner is requesting a variance from the off-street parking requirements provided in the zoning code to allow for the use of the upper level as a café. Estimated occupancy load:

<b>Upper Level</b>	<b>5,563 SF (useable)</b>		
Kitchen	1,404 SF / 200	=	8 OCC
Cafe/Restaurant	1,620 SF / 15	=	108 OCC
Office	559 SF / 150	=	4 OCC
Storage	596 SF / 300	=	2 OCC
Patio	485 SF / 15	=	33 OCC
Circulation/Restrooms	899 SF / 0	=	0 OCC
Total Upper Level		=	155 OCC
<b>Lower Level</b>	<b>5,514 SF (useable)</b>		
Storage/Mechanical	5,514 SF / 300	=	19 OCC
Total Lower Level		=	19 OCC
Total Building		=	174 OCC

Zoning code requires “food service, limited” to provide parking equal to 30% of the building capacity. This would require 53 parking stalls for building based on the estimated occupancy load.

The property contains 41 existing parking stalls. As shown on the existing site plan, the site is fully developed, with no reasonable or practical way to expand the parking count to meet the zoning requirements of the proposed use. The physical constraints of the property (including the existing building footprint, required parking aisle widths, and lot extents) prevent the addition of parking stalls sufficient to achieve compliance with zoning requirements.

The property has been vacant since the current owner purchased it in 2022. The lot size, configuration, building placement, and parking layout predate the proposed use and ownership. This request does not arise from a desire to intensify the site beyond its physical capacity, but rather to allow reasonable reuse of a long-vacant commercial building.

Strict enforcement of the off-street parking requirement would limit the possible uses for the building, due to physical constraints that cannot be mitigated. This constitutes a practical difficulty that justifies the requested variance.