



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Planning Division

m e m o r a n d u m

TO: The Urbana Zoning Board of Appeals

FROM: Jeff Engstrom, Planner I

DATE: May 11, 2007

SUBJECT: ZBA-07-MAJ-05: Request by Vineyard Church for a Major Variance to allow a 126% increase in the display area of an institutional sign at 1500 North Lincoln Avenue in the R-4, Medium Density Multiple-Family Residential Zoning District.

Introduction

American Dowell Signcrafters, on behalf of the Vineyard Church, has submitted a request for a major variance to allow a 56.6 square foot wall sign at 1500 N. Lincoln Avenue. Section IX-4.H of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance states that institutional uses such as churches are allowed one sign per frontage, either a freestanding sign or a wall sign, and the maximum face area per sign is 25 square feet.

Pursuant to the Urbana Zoning Ordinance, in order for a major variance to be granted the Zoning Board of Appeals must recommend approval of the petition by a two-thirds majority vote of members present and voting and forward it to City Council for final approval.

Background

The Vineyard Church made a significant expansion in 2005. The expansion included the construction of a new wing as well as paving and landscaping their parking lot. The Church has applied to install a wall sign on this new wing, which is set back 250 feet from Lincoln Avenue. The sign will be 56.6 square feet in area. The church currently has a monument sign adjacent to Lincoln Avenue that is 20 square feet in area. The Zoning Ordinance allows for Institutional uses to have one 25 square foot freestanding or wall sign per frontage. Since the Vineyard fronts on both Lincoln and Bradley Avenues, they are allowed up to two 25 square foot signs.

It should be noted that businesses on adjacent properties are allowed additional signage, as they are zoned for commercial use. Since the subject property is zoned R-4 and is used as a church, they are only allowed signage under the Institutional Signs provision, and Table IX-2, Standards for Wall Signs does not apply.

Development Regulations

According to Section IX-4. General Sign Provisions, Institutional Signs “shall not exceed a total of 25 square feet in display area. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. There may be one sign per frontage.” The proposed sign is 56.6 square feet in area, but meets all other requirements.

Surrounding Properties

The following chart, along with the attached exhibits, offers a more detailed summary of the surrounding zoning and land uses.

Direction	Zoning	Existing Land Use	2005 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use
Site	R-4, Medium Density Multi-Family Residential	Institutional	Institutional
North	B-3, General Business	Commercial Industrial	Community Business Industrial
West	B-3, General Business	Commercial	Community Business
South	R-4, Medium Density Multi-Family Residential	Multi-Family Residential	Central Business
East	County R-4, Multiple Family Residence	Single-Family	Parks/Recreation

Discussion

The property is located on North Lincoln Avenue, and is surrounded by commercial and multi-family residential uses. This stretch of Lincoln Avenue is a commercial corridor; surrounding properties include a gas station/convenience store, an ATV dealership, and a welding supply store. All of these commercial uses are allowed multiple forms of signage, including wall signs, to direct customers to their sites. As an institutional use on a property zoned residential, the Vineyard is only allowed one 25 square foot sign per frontage. At 250 feet away from the street, the applicants believe that a 25 square foot sign would be too small to read.

Exhibit “F” shows the proposed sign and a rendering of what it will look like on the wall. The wall is quite large; the outermost face is over 1,000 square feet in area, and the entire face is almost 5,000 square feet. A 25 square foot sign is not proportional to the wall area, nor is it easily visible from the road.

As a place of assembly, the Vineyard receives hundreds of worshipers, deliveries, service vehicles, out-of-town visitors, and other such traffic. In order to provide safe and convenient access, the applicants believe visitors need to know where the Vineyard is and how to access it. The proposed variance will allow for visitors to identify the Vineyard campus while traveling along the North Lincoln Avenue

commercial corridor. This will allow for safe lane changes and turns in a high-traffic area.

Requirements for a Variance

Section XI-3.C.2 of the Urbana Zoning Ordinance requires the Zoning Board of Appeals to make findings based on variance criteria. The following is a review of the criteria (*in italics*), followed by staff analysis for this case:

1. *The proposed variance will not serve as a special privilege because the variance requested is necessary due to special conditions and circumstances relating to the land or structure involved or to be used for occupancy thereof which is not generally applicable to other lands or structures in the same district;*

The special condition relating to this property is the fact that the wall where the sign will be installed is set back 250 feet from a major arterial roadway. Institutional uses are normally allowed a 25 square foot sign. This would be adequate if it were on a smaller parcel in a residential area. North Lincoln is a commercial corridor with higher traffic volumes and speeds as well as multiple business signs competing for the attention of the driver. According to the applicants, a 25 square foot sign is not large enough to adequately identify this building to drivers.

2. *The variance requested was not the result of a situation or condition having been knowingly or deliberately created by the Petitioner;*

The petitioner contacted the City to determine the requirements for institutional signs, and has filed requests for the appropriate variance. This property is zoned residential although it is located along a business corridor.

3. *The variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood;*

The variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood, as the neighborhood consists of commercial uses and large residential apartment and condominium developments. The commercial uses all have signage that is much larger than what is allowed at the subject property. The zoning ordinance allows for adjacent businesses in the B-3 district to have wall signs that are up to 10% of the total wall area, up to 350 square feet. This sign will be on a 1,060 square foot section of wall. If this property were zoned B-3, the same as the surrounding properties, they could have a 106 square foot sign.

4. *The variance will not cause a nuisance to adjacent property;*

The sign will not cause a nuisance to adjacent properties. It will be on a wall facing Lincoln Avenue, a busy arterial roadway. The sign has no internal illumination and no moving parts. Also, the sign will not be visible to any adjacent residences.

5. *The variance represents generally the minimum deviation from requirements of the Zoning Ordinance necessary to accommodate the request.*

The petitioner is requesting the smallest sign that they believe can be seen adequately from the street.

6. *The variance requested is the result of practical difficulties or particular hardship in the way of carrying out the strict letter of the Zoning Ordinance relating to the use, construction, or alteration of buildings or structures or the use of land.*

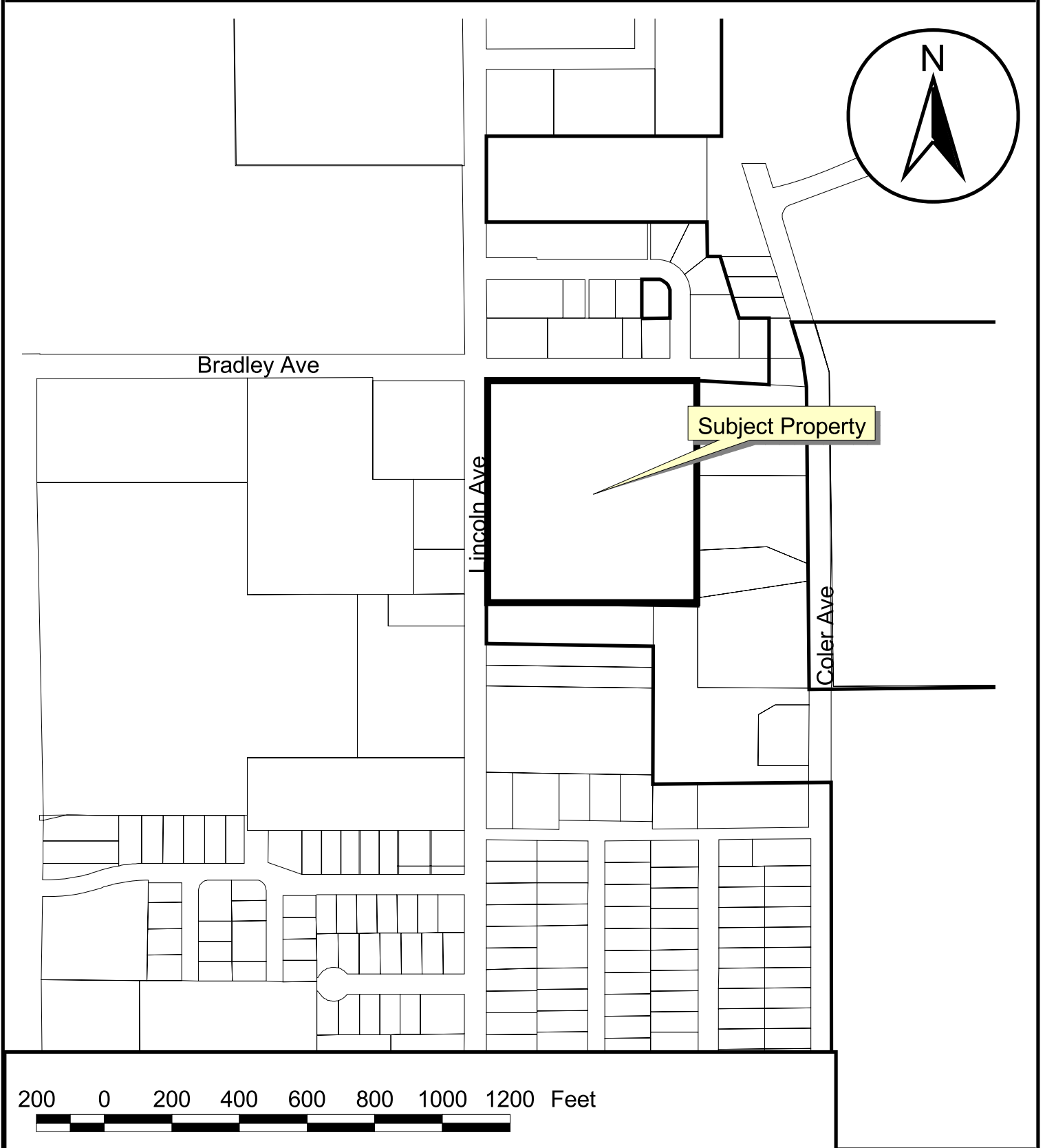
The practical difficulty is that the zoning ordinance allows very minimal signage in the R-4, Medium Density Multiple Family Residential District. In this case, a large institution is located in a commercial corridor, and set back 250 feet from a busy arterial roadway. Since the property is zoned R-4, they are only allowed to have a 25 square foot institutional sign.

Findings

1. The Vineyard Church, located at 1500 North Lincoln Avenue, is an institutional property zoned R-4, Medium Density Multiple Family Residential District.
2. Section IX-4. General Sign Provisions, states Institutional Signs “shall not exceed a total of 25 square feet in display area. If building mounted, these signs shall be flat wall signs, and shall not project above the roofline or front façade of the building. There may be one sign per frontage.”
3. The Vineyard Church is located on a commercial corridor and surrounded on two sides with businesses that are allowed a much greater amount of signage.
4. The proposed wall sign will be 56.6 square feet in area, which is in proportion to the area of the wall it will be mounted upon.
5. The variance will not serve as a special privilege because the building is set back 250 feet from the street, and a conforming wall sign would not be adequately visible from the road.
6. The variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood because the proposed sign will be smaller than existing signs on adjacent properties.
7. The variance will not cause a nuisance to adjacent property because the sign will face a commercial corridor rather than nearby residences, and will not have moving parts or be internally illuminated.
8. The variance represents generally the minimum deviation from requirements of the Zoning Ordinance necessary to accommodate the request because the proposed sign is just large enough to be seen adequately from Lincoln Avenue, 250 feet away.
9. The variance requested is the result of practical difficulties or particular hardship because the zoning ordinance allows very minimal signage in the R-4, Medium Density Multiple Family Residential District. In this case, a large institution is located in a commercial corridor, and set back 250 feet from a busy arterial roadway. Since the property is zoned R-4 and is an institutional use, it is only allowed to have a 25 square foot institutional sign.

Options

Exhibit A: Location Map



ZBA Case: ZBA-07-MAJ-05
Petitioner: The Vineyard Church
Location: 1500 N. Lincoln Ave
Description: A Major Variance request to allow a 56.6 sqft institutional sign



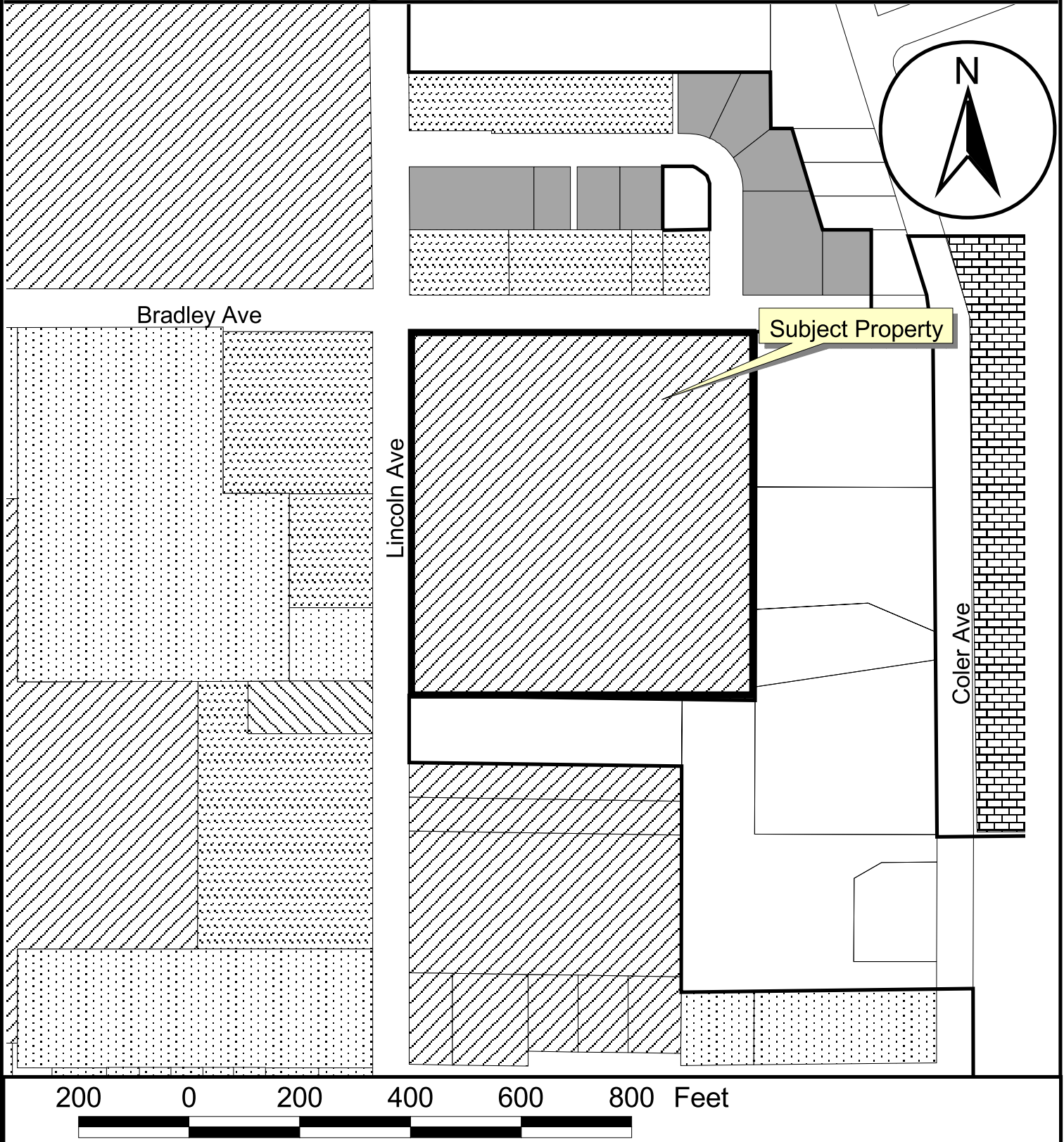
-  Subject Property
-  City Boundry

Exhibit B: Zoning Map



ZBA Case: ZBA-07-MAJ-05
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 Location: 1500 N. Lincoln Ave
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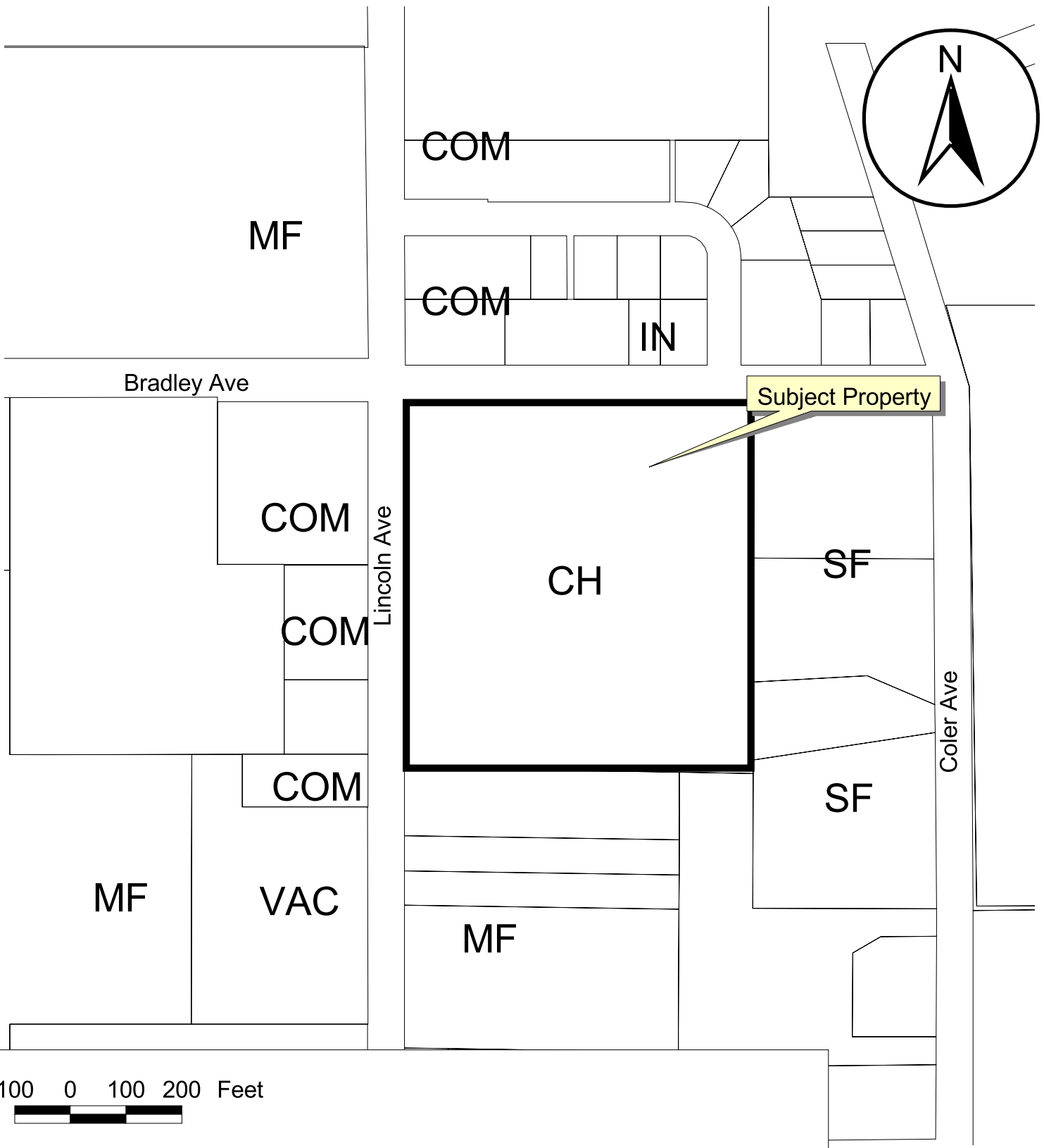
-  R2 - Single Family
-  R4 - Medium Density Multiple-Family
-  R5 - Medium High Density Multiple-Family
-  B3 - General Business
-  IN - Industrial
-  CRE - Conservation-Recreation-Education

Exhibit C: Existing Land Use Map

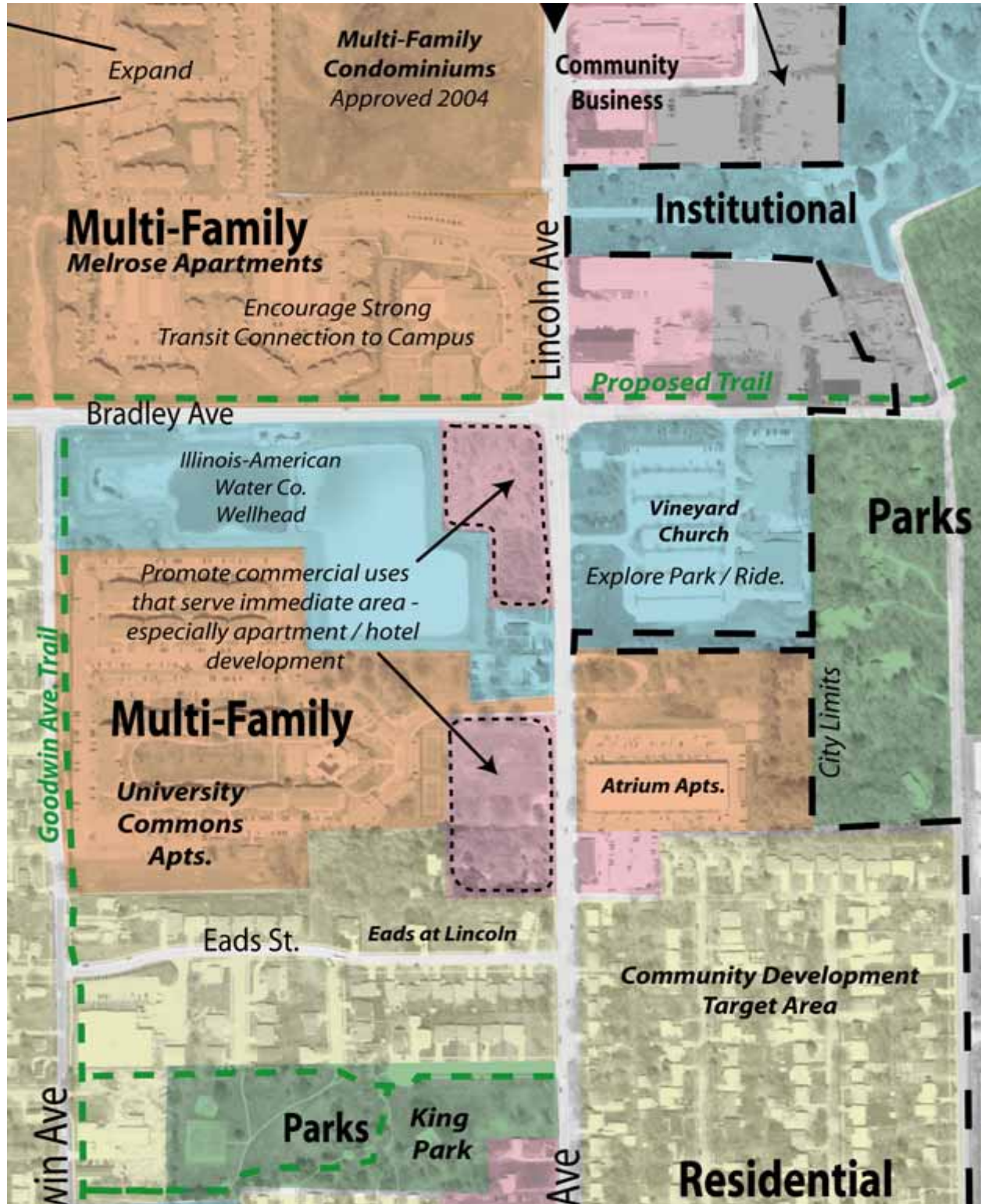


ZBA Case: ZBA-07-MAJ-05
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Prepared 04/30/2007 by Community Development Services - jme

SF - Single Family (County)
MF - Multi Family
COM - Commercial
IN - Industrial
CH - Church
VAC - Vacant Land

Exhibit D: Future Land Use Map



ZBA Case: ZBA-07-MAJ-05
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Exhibit E: Aerial Map



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Exhibit "H": Site Photos

Views of The Vineyard from the west

