



Division of Zoning and Development Review

City of Pittsburgh, Department of City Planning

412 Boulevard of the Allies, Second Floor

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Date of Hearing: August 13, 2026
Date of Decision: September 28, 2026

Zone Case: 107 of 2026
Address: 12 Federal Street
Lot and Block: 8-M-4
Zoning Districts: RIV-NS
Neighborhood: North Shore

Request: Electronic Sign

Application: BDA-2026-06033

Variances	Section 919.03.O.3	Electronic non-advertising signs are not permitted in RIV-NS Districts
	Section 919.03.O.3.d	Changeable copy area of an electronic non-advertising sign limited to a maximum of 50 sf; 67 sf proposed

Appearances:

Applicant: Bill Sittig, Kari Borello, Josef Petrack

Findings of Fact:

1. The Subject Property is located at 12 Federal Street in a RIV-NS (River, North Shore) District in the North Shore.
2. A five-story, multi-tenant office building is located on the property.
3. The primary entrance to the building is not on Federal Street but is within a recessed arcade area at the corner of the building, which faces a terrace, the adjacent Allegheny Landing Park and the Allegheny River.
4. On the Federal Street side of the ground floor, the design of the building includes brick columns with windows that are set back 2' from the columns. The windows are currently tinted.

5. The recently-created PNC Park Subdistrict of the North Shore Entertainment District is located directly across Federal Street from the Subject Property. The Subject Property and the other parcels on the opposite side of Federal Street are not included in the North Shore Entertainment District.

6. The Applicant, S&T Bank, is in the process of renovating a tenant space on the ground floor of the building for use as a retail bank branch.

7. As an existing office tenant of the building, an S&T Bank wall sign is located on the building façade that faces Allegheny Landing Park and the Allegheny River. An additional S&T Bank wall sign is intended for the Federal Street façade.

8. For the retail bank branch in the ground floor tenant space, the Applicant proposes to install a 11'-10" by 5'-8" (67 sf) "digital wall" that would be located 3' behind the window that faces Federal Street. The digital wall would be used to display changing information about various services that the bank branch provides.

9. The Applicant asserted that the design features of the building's ground level façade are unique features that limit the visibility of the retail tenant space in the context of the building.

10. The Applicant generally asserted that because the building looks like an office building, the proposed digital wall would identify the retail bank branch use and would distinguish the retail bank space and use from the office uses in the building.

11. The Applicant provided a series of renderings of the proposed digital wall that are intended to demonstrate the distance from which the digital wall would be visible, and generally asserted that the proposed size of the digital wall would be the minimum that would allow the intended content for the digital wall to be legible from the PNC Park side of the street.

12. The Applicant did not provide any evidence that the size of the digital wall proposed would be the minimum that would afford relief from the prohibition against electronic non-advertising signs in the RIV-NS District or from the 50 sf area permitted for electronic non-advertising signs.

13. The Applicant identified other signs in the vicinity of the Subject Property and asserted that the proposed digital wall would not have a significant impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

14. One of the signs that the Applicant identified is an electronic non-advertising sign, similar to the one proposed here, for a bank branch that is proximate to the Subject Property. The Applicant did not provide any specific information as to whether and when that sign had been approved or installed or whether it violates the current Code requirements.

15. The Applicant noted that electronic signs are permitted for public destination facilities in the North Shore Entertainment District and asserted that the proposed digital wall is necessary to attract attention in the context of other signs in the area surrounding PNC Park.

16. The Applicant generally asserted that the proposed digital wall would comply with the operational standards for electronic non-advertising signs in Section 919.03.O.3. The

Applicant did not identify the distances between the proposed digital wall and Allegheny Landing Park or the Allegheny River.

17. No one appeared at the hearing to oppose the request.

Conclusions of Law:

1. Code Section 919.01.C.5 defines “electronic sign” as “any sign, video display, projected image, or similar device or portions thereof with text, images, or graphics generated by solid state electronic components.” The definition states that electronic signs include, but are not limited to “signs that use light emitting diodes (LED), plasma displays, fiber optics, or other technology that results in bright, high-resolution text, images, and graphics.”

2. Section 919.03.O allows for the electronic non-advertising sign use as a special exception only in HC, UI and GI Districts, subject to the criteria in Section 919.03.O.3, which include limitations on motion, dwell time, brightness and location.

3. Section 919.03.O.3.d states that the changeable copy of an electronic non-advertising sign is limited to 50% of the total permitted sign area, up to a maximum size of 50 sf.

4. Section 919.03.O.3.e.i provides that electronic non-advertising signs are not be located within 100’ of various features, including parks or rivers, and are not be directed primarily towards those features.

5. The proposed 11’-10” by 5’-8” (67 sf) digital wall is an electronic non-advertising sign within the Code’s definition.

6. Because electronic non-advertising signs are not permitted in RIV-NS Districts, the Applicant seeks a use variance to allow a type of signage that is prohibited in the RIV-NS District. Because the proposed 67 sf sign area exceeds the 50 sf maximum area permitted for electronic non-advertising signs, the Applicant also seeks a dimensional variance from that requirement. Dimensional variances from the location requirements may also be required.

7. Section 922.09.E sets forth the considerations that the Board is to apply to both use and dimensional variances, including whether unique circumstances or conditions of a property would result in an unnecessary hardship; whether the property could be developed in accordance with the Code’s requirements; whether the requested variance would adversely affect the essential character of the area; and whether the variance requested reflects the minimum variance that would afford relief with the least modification possible.

8. The Applicant seeks to install the 67 sf digital wall for the purpose of increasing visibility of the new retail bank in the ground floor tenant space and for ease in changing messaging. These preferences do not constitute an “unnecessary hardship” resulting from any unique circumstances or conditions of the Subject Property.

9. Some of the design features of the building, including the brick columns on the Federal Street frontage and the recessed primary entrance, create challenges in distinguishing the ground floor retail space from the office uses permitted in the building and some variance relief from the Code’s requirements for signage may be appropriate to address those challenges. However, the Applicant did not present sufficient evidence to demonstrate why an

electronic non-advertising sign is the only means to enhance the visibility of the retail bank or that the 67 sf area proposed would be the minimum necessary. The Applicant also did not address the location of the proposed sign in proximity to Allegheny Landing Park or the river.

10. For these reasons, the Board concludes that it must deny the request for variances to allow for the proposed 67 sf electronic non-advertising sign, without prejudice to submit a revised signage plan.

Decision: The Applicant's request for use and dimensional variances to allow for the proposed 67 sf electronic non-advertising sign is DENIED, without prejudice, to allow for the submission of a revised signage plan.

s/Alice B. Mitinger
Alice B. Mitinger, Chair

s/Lashawn Burton-Faulk
LaShawn Burton-Faulk

s/ John J. Richardson
John J. Richardson

Note: Decision issued with electronic signatures, with the Board members' review and approval.