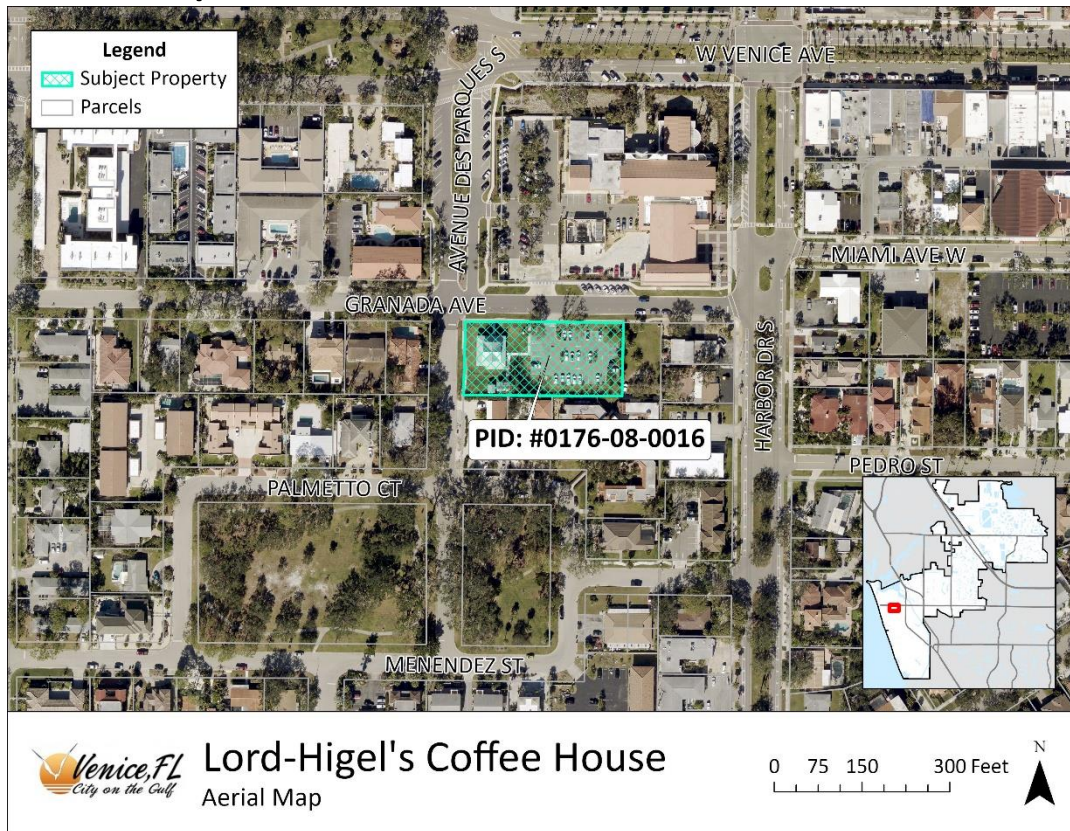


25-76VZ Lord-Higel's Coffee House Sign Staff Report



GENERAL INFORMATION

Address:	409 Granada Avenue
Request:	Seeking variance from Sec. 87-3.5.3.B.4.3 for a projecting wall sign larger than four square feet
Leaseholder/Applicant:	Gary Lauters II
Agent:	Alyssa Williams
Parcel ID:	0176080016
Parcel Size:	±0.4 acres
Future Land Use:	Government
Zoning:	Government
Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood:	Island Neighborhood
Application Date:	November 19, 2025

I. VARIANCE REQUEST AND SUBJECT PROPERTY INFORMATION

The subject property is located at 409 Granada Avenue and is a City-owned property leased by the applicant for use of the historic Lord-Higel house as a coffee shop. The applicant has obtained a projecting sign with an area of approximately 12.6 square feet and is requesting a variance to use it on the southwest corner of the building. Sec. 3.5.3.B.4.3 for projecting signs limits the maximum size to 4 square feet. The sign design and proposed location are shown in the following images. Note that the wall-mounted sign indicated on the site plan was permitted already, compliant with the Land Development Code.



Site Photographs



View from northeast corner of Granada and Ave des Parques intersection



View across Ave des Parques towards the east



View from southwest across Ave des Parques of proposed sign location at southwest corner of building

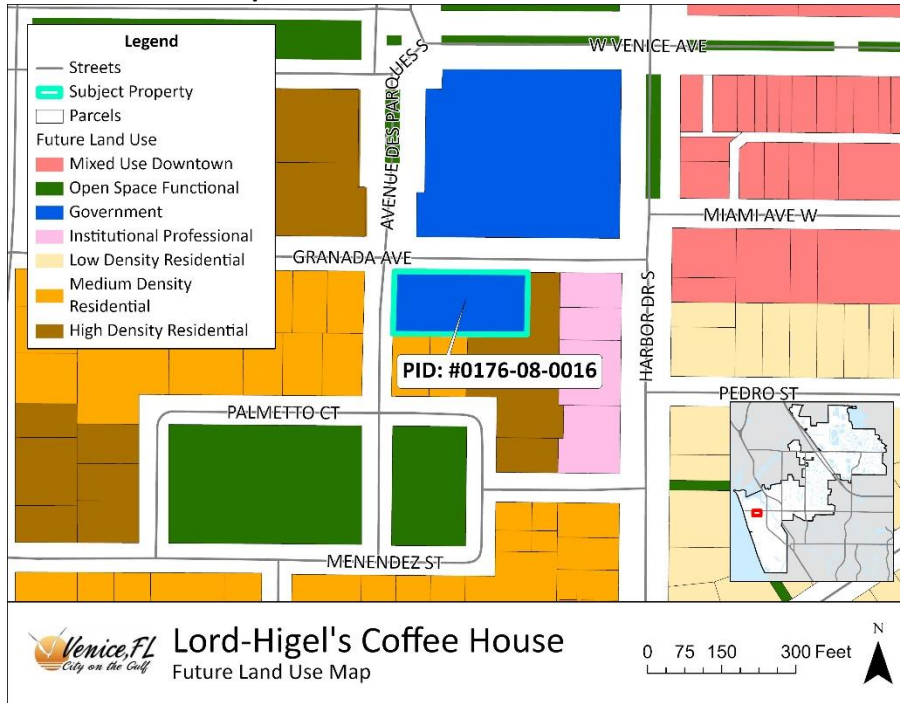


Zoomed in view from southwest across Ave des Parques of proposed sign location at southwest corner of building

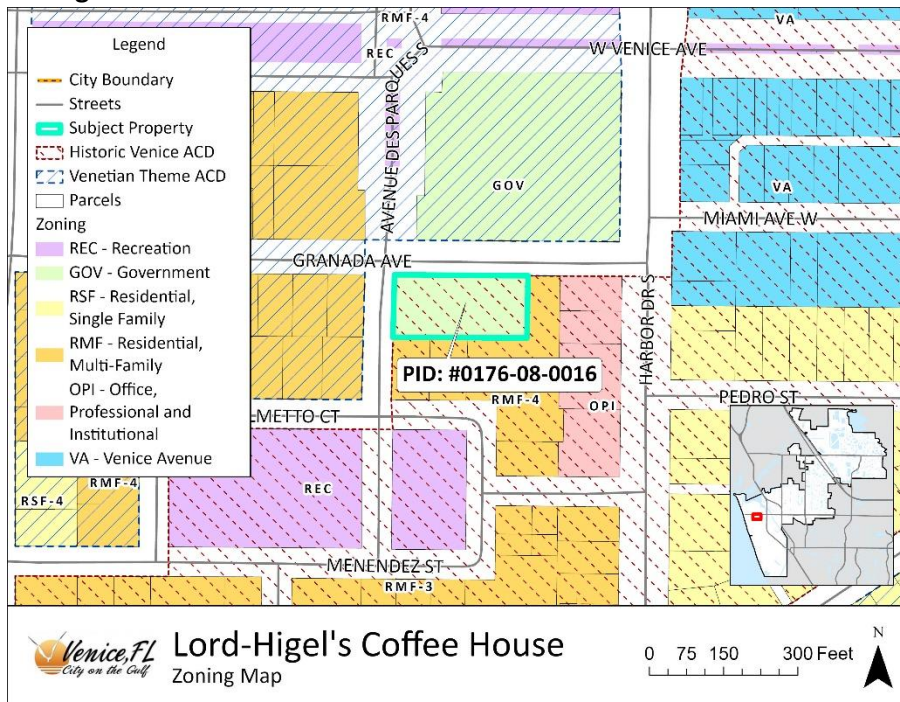
Future Land Use and Zoning

This property is south of City Hall, which has Government designations, and to the east, west, and south of this property are medium and high density residential properties with Residential, Multi-Family 3 and 4 zoning.

Future Land Use Map



Zoning



II. PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS FOR VARIANCE REVIEW

The procedural requirements contained in Chapter 87 Section 1.2 concerning receipt of written petition, notice of public hearing and scheduling of hearing have been satisfied. Chapter 87, Section 1.13.3 specifies that the Planning Commission shall, based upon substantial and competent evidence, make an affirmative finding on each consideration in granting a variance application or find that variance will correct a bona fide staff error that has led to design or construction that does not comply with the LDR:

- 1. The particular physical surroundings, shape, topographical condition, or other physical or environmental condition of the specific property involved would result in a particular hardship upon the owner, as distinguished from a mere inconvenience, if the strict letter of the regulations were carried out.**

Applicant's Response: The historic Lord-Higel House sits at the intersection of Granada Ave. and Ave des Parques and has recently been adapted for the reuse as a café. The building is a stand-alone structure and sits back from the road approximately 43 feet from the corner of the building to the corner of Ave des Parques.

Due to these particular physical conditions, a projecting sign from the corner of the building could be dangerous to the public welfare attempting to read the signage if it were sized in compliance fully with the LDC. After two decades of sitting vacant, the Lord-Higel House has received much attention during its adaptive reuse build out phase. Upon opening, the banner explaining the noticeable changes and activity will be removed and without an appropriately sized sign, there will be nothing to explain the obvious change in use. In an effort to engage the community, per our proposal to the City, a sign within the parameters of our requested variance will allow our community to better understand the new adaptive reuse, while keeping a focus on public welfare within the intersection.

In addition to the concern to public welfare, potential customers would be unable to safely read or locate a sign set so far back from the road if the strict letter of the regulations were carried out, resulting in an undue hardship for this organization and threatening the long term Sustainability.

- 2. The conditions upon which the request for a variance is based are unique to the parcel and would not be applicable, generally, to other property within the vicinity.**

Applicant's Response: Other properties within the vicinity, located on roads such as Venice Ave and Miam Ave, contain numerous examples of projecting signs that adhere to the LDC. Properties on these two roads, with similar frontage measurements, are located less than 20' from the road per the Sarasota County Property Appraiser. Many properties located on corners in the City are less than 15' from the building to the corner and in these cases, the variance that we seek would not be applicable.

Generally, in comparison to these measurements and properties, the parcel is unique and creates conditions that a larger sign would appropriately fit. Based off the circumstances of the building placement on the parcel, the newly planted hedge line, and the sidewalk located outside the hedge line, the general public will not be walking underneath the sign, which is a contrast to many roads in the City and Historic District.

3. **The variance is not based on any conditions, including financial, occupational, or ability, which are personal to the applicant as applied to the property involved in the application.**

Applicant's Response: The request for a variance is strictly based on the unique conditions of the parcel, the concern for public welfare within the intersection, as well as the undue hardship that would result if an illegible sign were installed under these circumstances.

4. **The alleged hardship has not been created by any person presently having an interest in the property or, it was it was created as a result of a bona fide error.**

Applicant's Response: The alleged hardship stems from the significant difficulty and expense that would be imposed on the organization, as well as the City, should the public not be able to view signage for this new adaptive reuse of this historic building that has been vacant since 2005. The goals set forth by the City Council for the adaptive reuse project includes Accessibility and Sustainability, both of which rely upon proper signage.

5. **The granting of the variance will not be detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to other property or improvements in the vicinity.**

Applicant's Response: The granting of the variance would protect the public welfare, as well as any adjoining properties, by providing clear and easily visible signage. The requested variance aims to reduce the potential for distracted driving and the injurious nature of last minute maneuvers within the intersection of Granada Ave. and Ave des Parques. The organization can find no evidence that the granting of this variance request would be detrimental to the public welfare, the City of Venice, other property, or any improvements in the vicinity.

6. **The variance granted is the minimum variance that will make possible the reasonable use of the property.**

Applicant's Response: The variance application requests the minimum variance that will make the reasonable use of the property possible. According to the LDC, projecting signs must meet four standards, including size. Within the sizing standards, four measurements are taken into account including sign length, sign width, clearance, and sign area. The design and layout of the potential projecting sign meets the length and clearance code requirements. We request a variance for the sign height and sign area only.

7. **The property cannot be put to a reasonable use which complies fully with the requirements of the Code unless the variance is granted.**

Applicant's Response: The historic building located on this parcel has gone through a careful, and intentional, adaptive reuse process, with a formal RFP through the City. Every possible option has been considered and implemented where appropriate to protect the integrity of this pioneer home. Without a granted variance, the organization, and as a result, the property, would struggle to be accessed by the general public. After thoughtful planning, the requested variance if approved, would create a legible and informative sign, allowing the public to carefully read the sign from the intersection, without blocking the view from opposing traffic or imposing on the newly installed crosswalk.

Summary Staff Comment: The request is not based on a staff error. The information provided in the application and materials should be sufficient to allow the Planning Commission to take action on the subject petition.