



**Project Name & Address:** 640 W Washington Avenue, Milwaukee Road Depot

**Application Type(s):** Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations to a Designated Madison Landmark

**Legistar File ID #** [65194](#)

**Prepared By:** Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

**Date Prepared:** April 27, 2021

## Summary

**Project Applicant/Contact:** Kaitlin Fischer, The Harvey House

**Requested Action:** The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of signage.

## Background Information

**Parcel Location/Information:** The subject site is a Designated Madison Landmark

### Relevant State Statute Section:

**Wisc SS 62.23(7)(em)2m.** In the repair or replacement of a property that is designated as a historic landmark or included within a historic district or neighborhood conservation district under this paragraph, a city shall allow an owner to use materials that are similar in design, color, scale, architectural appearance, and other visual qualities.

### Relevant Ordinance Sections:

- 41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.** A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.
- (1) New construction or exterior alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
    - (a) In the case of exterior alteration to a designated landmark, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
    - (b) In the case of exterior alteration or construction of a structure on a landmark site, the proposed work would meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
    - (c) In the case of exterior alteration or construction on any property located in a historic district, the proposed exterior alteration or construction meets the adopted standards and guidelines for that district.
    - (d) In the case of any exterior alteration or construction for which a certificate of appropriateness is required, the proposed work will not frustrate the public interest expressed in this ordinance for protecting, promoting, conserving, and using the City’s historic resources.
  - (3) Signs. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs unless it finds that any of the following are true:

- (a) The size or design of the sign(s) would adversely affect the historic fabric of the structure or the district
- (b) The sign(s) fails to comply with Chapter 31, MGO; (c) The sign(s) fails to comply with specific standards and guidelines for signs adopted in each historic district under this ordinance.

**Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation**

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

**Analysis and Conclusion**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for a complete reworking of the signage on the site. The Milwaukee Road Depot is a designated landmark that includes both historic buildings and historic railroad rolling stock. The site has changed over time and the proposal would remove and alter some of the more recent signage introduced to the site, and incorporate new signage throughout the property for the different businesses located onsite.

The proposal is to remove an existing ground sign installed on a nonhistoric brick pier at the front of the property, and install new tenant signage on the metal fencing located between the brick piers. The existing sign on the street façade would be replaced with a sign that would cover all of the signage band above the enclosed storefront. A separate nonhistoric ground sign with tenant signage that is currently located behind one of the nonhistoric brick piers at the front of the property is to be removed. A new projecting sign is proposed for the baggage house building, which will mimic the appearance of the projecting sign on the passenger depot building. The application also includes a description of proposed directional signage throughout the site. Finally, the

applicant proposes to paint new signage on the historic rolling stock. The new signage is of a font and color palette that blends with the repurposed historic train car, but is separate and will read as new signage. Rolling stock is often repainted as part of its maintenance, so the new signage could be readily repainted as a means to remove it in the future.

Of the signage to be removed, none of it is historic and some of it did not blend with the historic character of the site. The new signage will read as new, but is in keeping with the character of the site and all of it is removable.

A discussion of the relevant standards follows:

**41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.** A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (1) New construction or exterior alteration. The Landmarks Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for exterior alteration or construction only if:
  - (a) The proposed work will need to meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
  - (b) N/A
  - (c) N/A
  - (d) It is in the public interest for the ongoing conservation and use of this historic site. This proposal will put more of the site into use and accessible for the public.
- (3) Signs. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs unless it finds that any of the following are true:
  - (a) None of the signage is of a design or size that it would adversely affect the historic fabric of the structures. All of the new signs are removable.
  - (b) The signage package will have to comply with Zoning standards.

**Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation**

1. This signage proposal is part of a larger rehabilitation of the overall site. The minimal changes of introducing the signage will not impact the defining characteristics of the structures or the site.
2. The historic character of the property is being retained and preserved. No historic materials are proposed for removal.
3. Several of the new signs incorporate the Streamline Moderne style of the historic rolling stock. There is an existing sign on the passenger depot with this style. The new signage uses the same architectural vocabulary but will read as new signage rather than introducing conjectural details into the site or creating a false sense of history.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. The new signage on the train car is in a location where no signage would have been historically and it is separate from the historic signage in place on the structures. The new signage that indicates that the former passenger car has been rehabilitated for a new use, and this signage can be painted over, which is a common occurrence with rolling stock. The other new signage on the property will also read as new additions and is removable.
10. The new signage is removable.

## **Recommendation**

Staff believes the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness are met and recommends that the Landmarks Commission approve the project with the following condition:

1. All signage attach to masonry buildings be attached with stainless steel fasteners in the masonry joints.