

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

November 11, 2024

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 617 North Shore Drive, Brittingham Boathouse

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for new signage

Legistar File ID # [85951](#)

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Date Prepared: November 6, 2024

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Mary Beth Growney Selene; Ryan Signs, Inc.

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

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is a designated landmark.

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 if it finds that the following are true:
 - (a) Signs are located within the façade areas set aside for signs as part of the façade design or are integrated and compatible with the structure where the façade areas have not been set aside for signs;
 - (b) New signs shall be consistent with the traditional signage pattern locations on a structure or a property, and shall feature materials and style of illumination typical of the period of significance for the property or district;
 - (c) Signs shall comply with Chapter 31, MGO;
 - (d) Signs shall comply with specific standards and guidelines adopted for historic districts under this ordinance.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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 proposed project is to install two ground-monument signs and one wall sign to the historic building, and install two flagpoles on the property. The Craftsman-style Brittingham Boathouse was constructed in 1909 and designed by noted Milwaukee architectural firm of Ferry & Clas, who were also the architects for the Wisconsin Historical Society building at 816 State Street and the Hiram Smith Hall on the UW Campus. The Park & Pleasure Drive Association, with additional funding from lumberman-philanthropist Thomas Brittingham, paid for the building, which is located within Brittingham Park, which was designed by John Nolen.

The boathouse has a street façade and entrance, but due to its type of use, the building has two primary façades and the other faces the lake. The monument signage is using a similar architectural vocabulary as the building. The application materials say that the placements of the signs are to be determined. Final placement can be approved by staff, but the proposed locations are where we would expect to see signage for this type of property. The applicant is also proposing wall signage, located above the lakeside entrance, below the roof eave. The LED lighting strip will provide external lighting that will be minimally visible to pedestrians.

The applicant has provided historic plans that show two flagpoles on the lakeside façade that pierced the roof of the building. Historic photos show that there were two flagpoles at this location:



1914 photo of Brittingham Bay, [WHS 131898](#)

Rather than reconstructing this design, which is problematic for the roof structure of the building, the proposal would be to install two flagpoles that flank the pedestrian entrance on the lakeside of the building, but in front of the building. The plans say exact locations and materials are still to be determined. Staff can approve the final exact locations if the plan is to keep with the concept of the flagpoles flanking the entrance and the flagpoles are of a simple design. This can be executed in a way that they will be read as new and not create a false sense of history.

As this property is owned by Madison Parks Division, Landmarks Commission is only one of the approving entities and the proposed signage and flagpoles will also need approval from Madison Parks.

A discussion of relevant standards follows:

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A certificate of appropriateness shall be granted only if the proposed project complies with this chapter, including all of the following standards that apply.

- (3) Signs. The Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs if it finds that the following are true:
 - (a) Wall signs on these types of structures are typically located on the wall, above the main entrance, which is where the wall signage is proposed.
 - (b) The new monument signs are proposed in the front and rear yards of the property, near the structure, which is where we tend to find monument signs for these types of properties. The design of both signs is compatible with the architectural character of the historic resource and the exterior lighting for the wall sign is integrated into the existing structure so the fixture itself will be minimally visible to pedestrians.
 - (c) Signs shall comply with Chapter 31, MGO;
 - (d) N/A

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

- 1. The property continues to be used as a boathouse and the proposed signage will provide messaging to pedestrians on both sides of the structure.
- 2. The proposed modifications will not remove distinctive materials or alter the features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property.

3. The signage will read as new and the location of the proposed light poles with clearly contemporary yet simple materials will allow them to read as part of the evolution of the property without creating a conjectural feature.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. The new signage and flagpoles on the property will be compatible with the historic character of the property, but will read as a product of their time.
10. The changes to the property are reversable and could be removed in the future.

Recommendation

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

1. Final signage and flagpole locations be approved by staff
2. Final flagpole specifications be approved by staff
3. Project receives approval from Madison Parks