

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

April 14, 2025

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 838 Williamson Street

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for an alternative design variance and exterior alterations

Legistar File ID # [87535](#)

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Date Prepared: April 9, 2025

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Joe Miletta, The Kubala Washatko Architects

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for an alternative design variance for the outdoor patio and alterations to the existing building.

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is located within the Third Lake Ridge local historic district

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.

41.19 VARIANCES.

- (6) Alternative Design Variance. The Landmarks Commission may grant a variance allowing, in a new or altered structure, elements that are otherwise prohibited under Sec. 41.18 if all of the following apply:
 - (a) The elements will enhance the quality of the design.
 - (b) The design complies with all other applicable standards under Sec. 41.18.
 - (c) The design does not allow material deviations from historic district standards and guidelines that would undermine the character or purpose of the historic district.
 - (d) The design will have a beneficial effect on the historic character of the area within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property.

41.25 STANDARDS FOR ALTERATIONS.

- (1) General
 - (a) Alterations are defined as any change to any portion of the exterior of a building or site that replaces existing materials or changes its appearance. This section provides standards for building alterations.
 - (b) Materials and Features
 - 1. Alterations shall be in keeping with the original design and character of the building.
- (2) Building Site
 - (a) General
 - 1. Fences and retaining walls in the front yard shall be in character with the style of fences or retaining walls historically found in the district or in keeping with the materials and character of historic resources in the district.
- (5). Windows and Doors
 - (c) Windows
 - 3. Replacement multi-light windows shall use true divided lights or simulated divided lights with window grids on the exterior and interior with spacer bars between the panes of glass.
- (7) Building Systems
 - (c) Lighting and Electrical Systems
 - 1. Decorative light fixtures shall replicate the original in style and placement.

Analysis and Conclusion

The proposed project is to install signage at the newly constructed building at 838 Williamson. The new signage will be on the designated signage area above the storefront and will require a reconfiguration of the previously approved downcast lighting. Additionally, the applicant proposes to change the storefront windows to folding windows that will read as two separate framed storefront windows in the existing storefront bays. Finally, in the outside patio area next to the structure, the applicant is proposing a seating area with permanent metal fencing, shade structures, and seating. There is no historic precedent for this type of seating area at the front of a property, but the applicant is requesting an Alternative Design Variance and has modified the design so that it is in keeping with the materials and architectural character of the building. Staff is supportive of the variance request and believes that the design is compatible with the architectural character of the structure and the district.

A discussion of 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.

- (3) Signs. The Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs if it finds that the following are true:
 - (a) The signage is proposed for the areas on the façade that were specifically set aside for commercial signage on this building.
 - (b) The wall signage with downcast lights providing illumination is typical of the period of significance for the district;
 - (c) Signs shall comply with Chapter 31, MGO;
 - (d) Signs appear to comply with the materials and lighting standards for the historic district.

41.19 VARIANCES.

- (6) Alternative Design Variance. The Landmarks Commission may grant a variance allowing, in a new or altered structure, elements that are otherwise prohibited under Sec. 41.18 if all of the following apply:
 - (a) Staff believes that the style of fencing and shade structures for the seating area will enhance the quality of the design.
 - (b) The materials and architectural character comply with the standards for the historic district
 - (c) The design does not allow material deviations from historic district standards and guidelines that would undermine the character or purpose of the historic district. As an infill site, this location is unique in its design and composition.
 - (d) The design will have a beneficial effect on the historic character of the area within two hundred (200) feet of the subject property.

41.25 STANDARDS FOR ALTERATIONS.

- (1) General
 - (a) Alterations are defined as any change to any portion of the exterior of a building or site that replaces existing materials or changes its appearance. This section provides standards for building alterations.
 - (b) Materials and Features
 1. The alteration of the site, the awnings, lighting, and signage band all appear to be in keeping with the original design and character of the building.
- (2) Building Site
 - (a) General
 1. The style of fencing/railing for the seating area in the front yard of the property are in keeping with the materials and character of historic resources in the district.
- (5). Windows and Doors
 - (c) Windows
 3. The new windows present as fully divided storefront windows when closed and can fold to open the storefront space.
- (7) Building Systems
 - (c) Lighting and Electrical Systems
 1. The replacement lighting on the building is in keeping with the character of the lighting it is replacing, and the lighting on the seating structure is in keeping with the character of the site with a reference to the former industrial nature of the site when it served as a construction yard.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness are met and recommends the Landmarks Commission approve the project as proposed.