

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF REPORT

October 16, 2023

PREPARED FOR THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION



Project Name & Address: 720 Williamson Street

Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for a sign

Legistar File ID # [80047](#)

Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division

Date Prepared: October 11, 2023

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Allie Novitske, Sign Art Studio

Requested Action: The Applicant is requesting that the Landmarks Commission approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of two non-illuminated signs

Background Information

Parcel Location/Information: The subject property is in 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.

41.25 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. The removal of historic features on elevations visible from the developed public right-of-way is prohibited.
3. The introduction of conjectural architectural features without historic precedent on the building is prohibited.

Analysis and Conclusion

The proposed project is to install two non-illuminated signs on the façade of 720 Williamson St, also known as the Olds Building. The L.L. Olds Seed Company building was designed by architect Alvan Small, constructed in 1912, and is a four-story masonry building that originally served as a warehouse. A projecting blade sign is proposed to be installed in the pilaster to the northeast of the entrance, and a wall sign is proposed to be installed within the framed area above the storefront windows to the northeast of the entrance. Both signs are proposed to be aluminum.

The application proposes two options for the wall sign. One would be individual channel letters that would each be attached to the masonry. The second option has the channel letters attached to a bar that would then be affixed to the building. The second option would ensure that the sign could be affixed at the masonry joints and would require fewer intrusions into the historic masonry, which would each be potential points of failure and water intrusion. As such, staff recommends proceeding with the second option.

A discussion of relevant standards follows:

41.18 STANDARDS FOR GRANTING A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

- (3) Signs. The Commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs if it finds that the following are true:
- (a) The location of the blade sign in the pilaster next to the entrance and the wall sign within the framed area above the storefront windows are locations where you would traditionally find signage on this type of building.
 - (b) The style of signage on this building would have changed over time. Projecting and metal channel letters are in keeping with the style of signage materials found historically within the district.
 - (c) Signs shall comply with Chapter 31, MGO, and the applicant is working with Zoning and the Urban Design Commission on compliance;
 - (d) Signs shall comply with specific standards and guidelines adopted for historic districts under this ordinance.

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 signage is located in a place both where you would tend to find such signage and there is evidence on the building that previous signage has been installed in these locations.
 2. The proposal will not remove architectural features from the building or cover over them.
 3. The signs will read as being of their time, blending with the building, and not read as conjectural features.

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. Signs be attached to the building at masonry joints using stainless steel fasteners
2. Approving option 2 for the wall sign with the letters attached to a bar that would then be attached to the building.