



Project Name & Address: 301 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison Masonic Temple

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

Legistar File ID # [64876](#)

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Date Prepared: April 13, 2021

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Gregory Marshall, Wisconsin Sign and Graphics Co.

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 the replacement of an existing, nonhistoric ground sign for a new, internally illuminated digital sign. The Madison Masonic Temple, designed by Law & Law, was constructed in 1923. The building was designated a Madison landmark in 1993 as one of the best examples of Neo-Classical architecture in downtown Madison and for its Masonic history. The character defining features of the building are its extensive use of limestone, the large entry stair, Ionic columns, decorative frieze, and a prominent cornice.

The current sign on the property is simple metal, and features a changeable sign area. The new sign will be slightly larger, be gray acrylic with the overall appearance of stone, and features a prominent cornice with a central Masonic symbol that mimics the decorative details on the building’s frieze. The push-through lettering on the top of the sign are proposed to be internally illuminated. A separate cut vinyl lettering area is at the base of the sign. The central area of the sign is an LED digital messaging center, that is 5’ x 6’. While the signage will

periodically change, per sign code requirements, the display must remain static and not feature animation or be in motion.

The style of sign uses similar architectural vocabulary as the building, but will still read as a new feature on the site. While it is a large sign, in context of the monumental building, it is in scale with the site.

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.

- (3) Signs. The commission shall approve a certificate of appropriateness for signs unless it finds that any of the following are true:
- (a) This property is adjacent to the Mansion Hill local historic district, but located outside of the boundary. The property is a designated landmark, so the consideration for this standard is if the size or design of the sign would adversely affect the historic fabric of the structure. The proposed signage is a ground sign and will not alter the historic fabric of the historic structure. While it is a large sign, given the context of the large building, the sign seems to be of an appropriate scale for this property. The design of the sign is similar in style to the building, but will read as new and complimentary to the historic resource.
 - (b) The sign must comply with Zoning standards.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. No proposed changes in use, but the updated sign will allow the Masonic Center to more effectively communicate the onsite programming at the property.
2. The existing sign is not historic, so no historic materials are proposed for removal.
3. While the new sign is decorative in nature, it is not introducing a conjectural detail or architectural elements from other buildings. It is a ground sign in keeping with a large Neo-Classical structure that references design elements on that structure.
4. N/A
5. N/A
6. N/A
7. N/A
8. N/A
9. As a ground sign, no historic materials will be destroyed. The new work is differentiated from the historic structure, but of a size and scale appropriate to the structure while utilizing similar architectural vocabulary, albeit scaled down from the monumental historic resource.
10. As a ground sign separate from the historic structure, it can be removed in the future without altering the historic integrity of the historic property.

Recommendation

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