



Project Name & Address: 924 Williamson Street
Application Type(s): Certificate of Appropriateness for exterior alterations
Legistar File ID # [69436](#)
Prepared By: Heather Bailey, Preservation Planner, Planning Division
Date Prepared: January 25, 2022

Summary

Project Applicant/Contact: Mary Beth Growney Selene, Ryan Signs
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 site is located in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District.

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.
- (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.
- 41.23 THIRD LAKE RIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT.**
- (7) Standards for Exterior Alterations in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use.
 - (a) Any exterior alterations on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial use that are located within two hundred (200) feet of other historic resources shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways:
 - 1. Height
 - (b) Alterations of street façade(s) shall retain the original or existing historical proportion and rhythm of solids to voids
 - (c) Alterations of street facade(s) shall retain the original or existing historical materials.

- (d) Alterations of roof shall retain its existing historical appearance.

Analysis and Conclusion

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to install new signage at the commercial structure, constructed in 1967, located at 924 Williamson Street. The new signage will include internally illuminated channel letters covering an area of 33'-9" by 3'. The new signage would span across the signage band area above the two bays of windows on the storefront.

While there are some buildings with this style of signage on them in the historic district, those are due to signage being approved by Zoning without approval by the Landmarks Commission or the Preservation Planner. For signage that has gone through the appropriate process, the Landmarks Commission has approved new wall signage that is within the signage band area on a commercial building, but is illuminated with gooseneck lights. The cases where internally illuminated signage was approved, it was a case of previously existing signage that involved a change of copy. If this were a new building, the requirement would be for the exterior illuminated signage that is in keeping with the character of the historic district. As a new sign on a building that does not currently have signage, this sign should be held to the same standards.

Staff has advised the applicant about what style of signage would be appropriate for the district, but the applicant would like to proceed with their internally illuminated individual letters. Other than the style of signage, the location is appropriate for this type of structure and is typical of signage locations in the district.

A discussion of the relevant ordinance sections 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) The structure was constructed outside of the period of significance for the district, but would be located in the area where most signage is affixed on commercial structures in the district.
 - (b) Signage appears to comply with [Chapter 31](#), MGO;
 - (c) Signage must meet the standards of the Third Lake Ridge Historic District.

41.23 THIRD LAKE RIDGE HISTORIC DISTRICT.

- (7) Standards for Exterior Alterations in the Third Lake Ridge Historic District - Parcels Zoned for Mixed-Use and Commercial Use.
- (a) Any exterior alterations on parcels zoned for mixed-use and commercial use that are located within two hundred (200) feet of other historic resources shall be visually compatible with those historic resources in the following ways:
 - 1. There are no proposed changes to the structure, but the location of the proposed signage is of a comparable height to signage on historic resources within 200 feet.
 - (b) No proposed changes to the rhythm of solids to voids on the street façade.
 - (c) The proposed work will not significantly alter the existing masonry on the structure, but will involve penetrations. What would be different is the signage configuration on the street façade that is not in keeping with the historic fabric of the district. For traditional signage, staff would recommend that the signage be affixed to the structure in the masonry joints with stainless steel fasteners.
 - (d) No proposed changes to the roof.

Recommendation

Staff believes that the standards for granting a Certificate of Appropriateness could be met and recommends the Landmarks Commission provide detailed guidance to the applicant for a resubmittal that is in keeping with the character of signage found on historic resources in the district.