



PREPARED FOR THE URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

Project Address: 316 State Street
Application Type: Major Exterior Alterations to an Existing Building in DC Zoning
UDC is an Approving Body
Legistar File ID # [83496](#)
Prepared By: Jessica Vaughn, AICP, UDC Secretary

Background Information

Applicant | Contact: Dimitri Vranas, Parthenon Gyros | Lindsey Michelson, Sign Art Studio

Project Description: The applicant is seeking approval for the replacement of the existing neon architectural lighting with LED faux neon lighting. The proposed lighting will be better integrated with the architectural features of the building.

Approval Standards: The Urban Design Commission (“UDC”) is an **approving body** on this request because the site is located in the Downtown Core zoning district. Pursuant to MGO Section 28.074(4)(b):

All new buildings and additions that are less than twenty-thousand (20,000) square feet and are not approved pursuant to (a) above, as well as all major exterior alterations to any building shall be approved by the Urban Design Commission based on the design standards in Sec. [28.071\(3\)](#), if applicable, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines.

Project History: In 1997, the UDC reviewed and approved exterior building modifications, including ...The existing neon lighting played a significant part of the review and discussion at that time was because it was installed without a permit or approval by the UDC. Ultimately, the UDC agreed to allow the owner to continue the operation of the existing neon accent lighting on the State Street façade with the understanding that no service/maintenance could be conducted that would prolong the useful life of the installation and that it would eventually be removed. Central to the UDC’s discussion was the intensity and brightness of the neon. Ultimately, the UDC’s formal action required that “...the neon installation be removed when it ceases to provide the intended affect or experiences operational failure.”

Design-Related Plan Recommendations: The project site is located within the [Downtown Plan](#) planning area. As such development on the project site is subject to the [Downtown Urban Design Guidelines](#). Generally, the intent of guidelines is to create interest and a safe welcoming environment and recognize that the right amount of lighting and appropriate fixtures can reinforce architectural features, structural elements or windows, however excessive lighting or inappropriate fixtures can also detract from the desired ambience and create glare.

More specifically, with regard to lighting, the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines state:

- Full cut-off fixtures should be used. Lighting should not spill into the sky, encroach on neighboring properties, nor cause excessive glare.
- The lighting on the top of a building should not compete with the view of the Capitol dome in views of the skyline.
- Exterior Lighting to accentuate building architecture and landscaping should not be excessive in either amount of intensity.
- Building-mounted fixtures should be compatible with the building facades.

Summary of Design Considerations and Recommendations

Staff recommends that the UDC review the proposed exterior modifications and make findings based on the aforementioned approval standards.

Upon review of the application materials, the proposed exterior architectural lighting appears to be consistent with the lighting standards pursuant to MGO 29.36, not triggering full cutoff, and the Downtown Urban Design Guidelines, including those that speak to minimizing glare and mounting fixtures in such a way that they are integrated into the architecture. In addition, staff believes that the proposed blue LED lighting emits significantly lower light levels (6.94 lumens per foot), than its true neon counterpart (38 lumens per foot).

At this time, staff has not identified any design considerations.