



22

Date July 19, 2021

RESOLUTION SETTING HEARING ON REQUEST FROM DES MOINES FILM FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR PROPOSED EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS TO THE VARSITY THEATER LOCATED AT 1207 25TH STREET

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2020, by roll call number 20- 1077, the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, approved the application of Denise Mahon (Owner) for the designation of the Varsity Theater, located at 1207 25th Street (“Property”), Des Moines, Iowa, as a local landmark “Varsity Theatre”; and

WHEREAS, the Property is legally described as follows:

N 40 F LOT 63 UNIVERSITY PLACE NOW INCLUDED IN AND FORMING A PART OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, POLK COUNTY, IOWA; and

WHEREAS, Des Moines Film (Contract Buyer), represented by Ben Godar (director) subsequently developed a plan of restoration of that premises, and made application for the required Certificate of Appropriateness before commencement of alteration or construction of that landmark, pursuant to Des Moines Municipal Code Section 58-62; and

WHEREAS, the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness receives consideration of the Landmark Review Board, which may recommend approval of the application; recommend approval with modification; or recommendation disapproval of the application, all pursuant to the authority set forth in Des Moines Municipal Code Section Section 58-62(f); and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2021, the Landmark Review Board met to consider this application and by a vote of 12-0 recommended **APPROVAL** of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed exterior alterations to the Varsity Theater; and

WHEREAS, Des Moines Municipal Code Section 58-62(f) provides that the recommendation of the Landmark Review Board is to be heard and considered in a public hearing before the City Council, to be set upon reasonable notice and with the opportunity for those interested both for and against to be heard; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Des Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. That the attached communications from the Landmark Review Board are hereby received and filed.
2. That the meeting of the City Council at which proposed application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed exterior alterations to the Varsity Theater is to be



Roll Call Number

Agenda Item Number

22

Date July 19, 2021

considered, and at which time the City Council will hear both those who oppose and those who favor the proposal, shall be held at 5:00 p.m. on August 9, 2021, at the Council Chambers, City Hall, 400 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines, Iowa.

- 3. That the City Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to cause notice of said proposal in the accompanying form to be given by publication once, not less than seven (7) days and not more than twenty (20) days before the date of hearing, all as specified in Section 362.3 and Section 414.4 of the Iowa Code.

Moved by _____ to adopt.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



 Judy K. Parks-Kruse
 Assistant City Attorney

(20-2021-4.02)

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
COLEMAN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
MANDELBAUM				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				
MOTION CARRIED			APPROVED	
_____ Mayor				

CERTIFICATE

I, P. KAY CMELIK, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

_____ City Clerk

Landmark Review Board Meeting

Tuesday, June 22, 2021

Members Present: Scott Allen, Tiffany Allison, Patricia Barry, Breann Bye, Martha Green, Stacey Hanley, Tim Hielkema, Mike Hildebrand, Michelle Morgan Huggins, Ann Schmid, York Taenzer, Vince Ward, and Steve Wilke-Shapiro

Staff: Whitney Baethke, Erin Olson-Douglas, Katherine Dostart, Glenna Frank, Naomi Hamlett, Katie Hernandez, Carrie Kruse, Ryan Moffatt, Glory Parks, Chandler Poole, Al Setka, and Jason Van Essen

Call to order: 7:36am

Request from James Hunter and Connie Conrad-Hunter (owners) to allow the following at 1810 Beaver Avenue (20-2021-4.01):

- A. Designate the “Snookies Neon Sign” as a local Landmark.**
- B. Issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow re-installation of the pole-mounted sign on site.**

Jason Van Essen outlined the request before the Board and gave a brief presentation summarizing the request to reinstall the repaired sign and how it meets the criteria to designate the sign as a local Landmark and to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Van Essen noted the sign’s very iconic nature to our local culture.

Mr. Van Essen explained that the City is moving away from allowing pole mounted sign but there is a provision in the Zoning Code that allows historically designated signs to be retained, and this one to be reinstalled.

Leslie and Jim Hunter thanked the Board members for being at the meeting and hearing the request. Ms. Hunter stated that Snookies is very important to their family. They started coming to Snookies about 20 years ago. Seeing the sign felt like family. In 2009 Ms. Hunter started working there and they bought it three years ago. Feel that reinstalling the sign gives hope to us, the residents of Beaverville, and the City of Des Moines. The sign is considered a beacon to many and is important to them.

Board questions and comments

- Our family commemorates the start and end of summer next to the Snookies sign. We can track our family history through the location of that great sign and place. Feel the application is appropriate for the items listed.
- Considered a neighborhood landmark for decades. It is something that we would lose without the Landmark designation.

Part A) Motion to approve designation as a local Landmark by Vince Ward. Seconded by Ann Schmid. Motion carried 12-0-1. Breann Bye abstained.

Part B) Motion to approve the requested certificate of appropriateness to allow the reinstallation of the pole mounted sign on site by Stacey Hanley. Seconded by Martha Green. Motion carried 12-0-1. Breann Bye abstained.

Request from Des Moines Film (contract buyer) represented by Ben Godar (Director) to allow the following at 1207 25th Street (Varsity Theater). (20-2021-4.02)

- A. Installation of a new blade sign.**
- B. Installation of a new marquee.**
- C. Removal of paint from the existing glazed tile brick facade.**
- D. Reconstruction of exterior Carrara glass veneer.**
- E. Replacement of the exterior glass doors.**
- F. Replacement of concrete walk**

Jason Van Essen gave a brief introduction of the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Steve King, RDG Planning and Design, stated that the project is seeking State Historic Tax Credits. The design team would like to recreate the marquee and blade sign to something closer to the 1938 marquee that was lost in the 1958 fire. The modern upper story will also be restored including the removal of paint.

Components that were modified from 1958 to 1963 are the all-glass entry doors and heavily, rusticated stone. There is a blend that shows the history and pattern of change and updates that have occurred to the Theater from 1963 that are being incorporated into the current façade.

The only component not related to the façade of the building, that is original, is the boiler room. In 1973 it was changed to the power room. This will be abandoned and it will be filled with sand and have utilities come through the space. This also allows for plantings to comply with the City of Des Moines standards. This design is not a true recreation of the sign, the design is trying to meet the City's arial limitations for current signage graphics.

Mr. King noted that Part II of the State Historic Preservation Office application, is approved with conditions. None of the conditions are associated with the proposed exterior treatment.

Mr. King explained that the stone on the exterior wraps into the interior of the building, because that was added in the 1958 modification, which is the most recent modification, that is the historic material of the lobby and the interior. If the stone interior treatment is not retained there is not enough historic fabric in the lobby to qualify. It is a character defining feature of the lobby that finds its way into the entry.

Board questions and comments

- Really like the project, I miss the Varsity.
- When comparing the proposed design to the Weatherall Harrison drawings it appears that the blade sign is about the right size but the back of it lines up with the back of the parapet.

- This is your opportunity to not have to meet the City's guidelines. It needs to be what it needs to be. I would encourage you to make more of a statement with the blade sign and even the front of the marquee.
- In the historic photos the front of the marquee is horizontal or flat on the bottom vs projecting down.
- The loss of the font of VARSITY on the marquee is a loss to the pedestrians on the street.
- Be Bold and get it as close as you can to bring back the era of the Theater.
- Sometimes there are added on pieces that would be better off if they were never added on. The stone around the entry for example. Feel the project would be better if the stone were not there. The justification when talking about the period of significance is that the blade, the marquee, the slit windows, and the stone have never been on the building at the same time.

Motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness as recommended by staff by Ann Schmid.
Seconded by Scott Allen. Motion carried 12-0.

Meeting Adjourned: 8:22am

CITY OF DES MOINES LANDMARK REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION
Tuesday, June 22, 2021

AGENDA ITEM #2

20-2021-4.02

Applicant: Des Moines Film (contract buyer) represented by Ben Godar (Director).

Location: 1207 25th Street (Varsity Theater)

Requested Action: A) Installation of a new blade sign.

B) Installation of a new marquee.

C) Removal of paint from the existing glazed tile brick facade.

D) Reconstruction of exterior Carrara glass veneer.

E) Replacement of the exterior glass doors.

F) Replacement of concrete walk.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Site Description: The subject property is located on the east side of 25th Street to the north of the University Avenue intersection and west of the Drake University campus. It contains the Varsity Theatre building, which is a 2-story, commercial building constructed in 1917. Staff understands that the applicant intends to renovate the subject building for theatre and office use.

2. Project Description: The applicant is proposing a series of interior and exterior renovations. A summary of the exterior work is listed in the heading of this report. Interior work includes mechanical, plumbing, electrical upgrades along with accessibility improvements. Interior work does not require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Additional Information: The subject property was designated as a Local Landmark by the City Council on June 22, 2020, by Roll Call Number 20-1077.

The Landmark Review Board is charged with reviewing proposed alterations to the exterior of locally designated landmarks and makes recommendations to the City Council. All Certificates of Appropriateness for local landmarks that are not located in a local historic district are issued by the City Council.

II. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

1. A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.
4. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
5. The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.
6. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

The applicant is proposing the installation of new signage to the exterior of the Varsity Theater, including a vertical blade sign and an angled marquee. The design of these elements is gleaned from historic 1938 photos of the Varsity Theater – the year in which the theater first opened. The marquee will include LED lighting.

The planned restoration of the exterior façade includes removal of paint from the existing glazed brick masonry on the upper story, and reconstruction of the black Carrara glass tiles on the lower level facade. The existing stone veneer will remain

as will the existing storefront windows and transom. Replacement of the full glass doors is needed and is proposed to match existing glazing.

Site improvements for the theater include replacement of the concrete public sidewalk, which is heaving in sections. Adjacent properties to the north and south have replaced the sidewalk; new concrete will match.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests that the Landmark Review Board recommend approval of the requested Certificate of Appropriateness.

DES MOINES FILM SOCIETY VARSITY THEATER HISTORIC REHABILITATION 1207 25TH STREET DES MOINES IA 50311

SITE PLAN SUBMISSION

PRELIMINARY -
 NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

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PROJECT NUMBER: 3003.203.00

DATE: 04-28-20

DRAWING INDEX:

- G1.1 COVER SHEET
- L1.01 SITE PLAN
- A05.01 PROPOSED EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

GENERAL SITE INFORMATION

SITE ADDRESS: 1207 25TH STREET DES MOINES, IA 50311

OWNER CONTACT:

BEN GODAR
 DES MOINES FILM
 1207 25TH ST
 DES MOINES, IA 50311
 515-988-8447
 ben@desmoinesfilm.org

PLAN PREPARER CONTACT:

ANDREA YTZEN
 RDG PLANNING & DESIGN
 301 GRAND AVENUE
 DES MOINES, IA 50309
 515-309-3259
 aytzen@rdgusa.com

ZONING AND LAND USE

CURRENT ZONING - MX2
 PROPOSED ZONING DISTRICT - NO CHANGE (MX2)

PROPOSED USED - SITE WILL INCLUDE A
 RENNOVATION OF THE EXISTING HISTORIC THEATRE
 FOR USE AS A MOVIE THEATRE

ZONING OF SURROUNDING PROPERTIES

NORTH: MX2, PUD
 SOUTH: MX2, PUD
 EAST: PUD
 WEST: P2

SETBACKS REQUIREMENTS OF ZONING DISTRICT -

NO SET BACK REQUIREMENTS - EXISTING BUILDING
 FILLS THE ENTIRE LOT.

SITE PLAN SUBMITTAL INFORMATION

1. THIS SITE SHALL BE MAINTAINED IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL CITY CODE APPLICABLE ON THE DATE OF SITE PLAN APPROVAL
2. ANY AMENDMENTS OR CHANGES TO THE PROJECT SITE THAT DO NOT MEET WHAT IS SHOWN ON THE SITE PLAN NEED TO BE APPROVED WITH THE PERMIT AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER PRIOR TO INSTALLATION/CONSTRUCTION
3. LIGHTING SHALL CONSIST OF LOW-GLARE CUT OFF TYPE FIXTURES TO REDUCE THE GLARE OF LIGHT POLLUTION ON SURROUNDING PROPERTIES.
4. THE REQUIRED LANDSCAPING, BOTH EXISTING AND PROPOSED SHALL BE MAINTAINED FOR THE LIFE OF THE CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY OR CERTIFICATE OF ZONING COMPLIANCE.
5. MECHANICAL OR UTILITY EQUIPMENT SHALL NOT BE LOCATED IN THE FRONT OR STREET-SIDE YARD, AND SHALL BE SCREENED FROM VIEW FROM ANY PUBLIC WAY WITH LANDSCAPING.
6. ALL ROOFTOP MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT MUST BE SCREENED ON ALL SIDES WITH ARCHITECTURAL SCREENING EQUAL TO THE HEIGHT OF THE EQUIPMENT.
7. ALL DISTURBED AREAS SHALL BE RESTORED BY SODDING.

LEGAL DESCRIPTION

N 40 LOT 63 UNIVERSITY PLACE

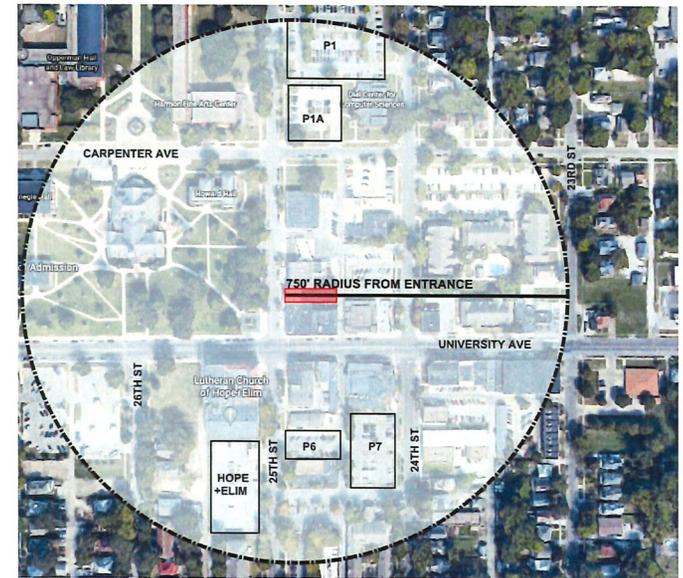
SITE PLAN APPROVAL:

- APPROVED APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS - SEE EXHIBIT "A"

IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 135-9, 2019 DES MOINES MUNICIPAL CODE, AS AMENDED.

NO CHANGES TO THIS PLAN UNLESS APPROVED IN WRITING FROM THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: _____ DATE: _____



SITE MAP - NOT TO SCALE

PARKING SCHEDULE

1 PARKING STALL/6 = 50 REQUIRED PARKING STALLS WITHIN 750 FEET OF ENTRY. OF THE 50, 2 STALLS ARE REQUIRED TO BE ACCESSIBLE SPACES.

LOT NUMBER	NAME	TOTAL STALLS
P1	FINE ARTS	53
P1A	VISTOR PARKING	32
P6	IRENE'S	23
P7	LEGAL CLINIC	53
=	HOPE/ELIM CHURCH	60
TOTAL PARKING WITHIN THE RADIUS		221

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