

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION**  
**AUGUST 28, 2017**  
**APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**  
**C14H-1981-0015**  
**Johns-Hamilton Building**  
**716 Congress Avenue**

**PROPOSAL**

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Install a sign for Third Rail Creative.

**PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

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The proposed sign is a blade sign with internal illumination. The proposed sign is a 6 square foot aluminum cabinet with push-through acrylic letters illuminated from inside the cabinet. The sign features a glass globe at the top corner that will also be illuminated.

**STANDARDS FOR REVIEW**

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The Commission's Standards for Review of signs at historic landmarks and in the historic districts include:

**B. PROJECTING SIGNS**

**LOCATION**

- A projecting sign should be located near the business entrance, just above the door or to the side of it, near eye level. The bottom of the projecting sign, however, shall be a minimum of 9 feet above the sidewalk.

**SIZE**

- The maximum size of an individual projecting sign (one face) shall be 6 square feet. It may not extend from the building façade for a greater distance than 6 feet or a distance equal to 2/3 the width of the abutting sidewalk, whichever distance is less.

**NUMBER OF SIGNS**

- In general, only one projecting sign per building façade is allowed. However, where the Commission determines that the result would be compatible with the District, one projecting sign shall be allowed for each distinct facade module of a building.

**II. SIGN MATERIALS**

- Use materials that are compatible with the materials of the building façade.
- Painted wood and metal are appropriate materials for signs. Do not use unfinished materials, including unpainted wood.
- Use plastic only in limited amounts. Plastic may not be the predominant materials on any sign.
- Do not use highly reflective materials.

**III. SIGN CONTENT AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

- Use symbol signs when appropriate for the business.
- Use colors for the sign that are compatible with those of the building front. Limit the number of colors on the sign to no more than three (3).
- Use a simple sign design and typeface, and a style and size of lettering that will be compatible with the building front. Avoid sign types that appear too contemporary.
- Limit the height of letters to 10 inches.

**IV. SIGN LIGHTING**

- Use an external, shielded lamp to direct light at the sign. Halo lighting (pin-mounted letters over the lighting source) or recessed can lighting in awnings are acceptable.  
DO NOT USE:
  1. Internal illumination
  2. Fluorescent lights
  3. Sodium vapor lights.

### **COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Not reviewed.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Deny the application because of the internal illumination that is not permitted by the sign guidelines. The illuminated globe, the size and materials of the sign all comport with the sign guidelines, it is only the internal illumination that does not.

Hi Mark:

I reviewed the application for the Townsend's sign and your application, and the difference is the approach to the internal illumination. Our sign standards for historic landmarks and the historic districts specifically state that no internal illumination is allowed, period. The Commission has allowed halo-lit signs, but they have defined halo-lit as lighting under pin-mounted letters. The applicants for the sign at the Townsend originally wanted exposed neon, and the Commission allowed them the push-through acrylic letters with an opaque vinyl over the face of the letters, as they were convinced that the effect would be the same as halo lighting. Your proposed sign does not accomplish the same effect. – the application shows lit letters with no halo lighting implied.

I think this is an issue that the Landmark Commission needs to weigh in on Monday evening for consistency in moving forward. The Townsend sign is not truly "halo" lighting either, as we have defined halo lighting as pin-mounted letters over lights attached to the backing of the sign, not acrylic push-through letters with vinyl on the face of the letters. The effect is similar, but I think the Commission needs to make a decision as to what is going to be allowed and an interpretation of what halo lighting truly is. However, in neither case does your proposed sign comply with either definition of halo lighting, so we are going to have to recommend denial and redesign.

*Steve Sadowsky*  
*Historic Preservation Officer*  
*City of Austin, Texas*  
*974-6454*

**From:** Mark Scholes]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, August 23, 2017 9:03 AM  
**To:** Sadowsky, Steve  
**Cc:** Austin Standley; Rice, Andrew  
**Subject:** Re: Third Rail Creative Sign

Thank you Steve. I took this picture this morning of our neighbor's sign, The Townsend, which is an internally lit sign, and was installed only months ago. You can see our current non-lit sign behind it and we are only wanting ours to have the letters and globe lit up per our plans which we submitted back in December. It will look very traditional.



Thank you,  
Mark

Mark Scholes

**Third Rail Creative**  
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