

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
DECEMBER 16, 2019
APPLICATION FOR A HISTORIC SIGN PERMIT
C14H-1983-003
320 CONGRESS AVENUE, SUITE B
KOPPEL BUILDING

PROPOSAL

Install a blade sign and flush vinyl letters.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

Two signs are proposed, in addition to the flush letters currently mounted above the door (approved in August 2019):

- 1) The proposed blade sign is 34" wide and 18" high, with an area of approximately 4 square feet. It will be manufactured of aluminum with vinyl lettering. The sign will be affixed to the building in the mortar joints, not the bricks.
- 2) The proposed vinyl letters are 39" high and 38" wide, with an area of approximately 10 square feet. They will be applied to the building's brick façade using heat.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

Standards for signs in historic districts include:

Number of signs. The Commission allows one sign per building, unless the building has multiple tenants; in this case, the Commission may allow one sign per façade module, if the façade modules correspond to tenant spaces. The Commission may also allow one sign for each street frontage if the building is at an intersection. A single directory sign is appropriate for a large building with multiple tenants.

The façade module has one approved sign already; the proposed signs would result in three signs on one façade module for one business. The proposal does not meet this standard.

Sign types. The Commission may allow window signs, awning signs, projecting signs, and flush mounted signs for most commercial buildings. Freestanding signs are allowed for office and retail uses in historic residential buildings.

The proposed project includes a projecting sign and flush-mounted letters.

Sign size. The maximum size for signs depends on the sign type. Projecting (blade) signs are allowed to be a maximum size of 6 square feet, while flush-mounted signs are allowed to have a maximum height of 2 feet and a maximum size of 20 square feet.

The proposed blade sign is 4 square feet and meets the standard. The proposed flush-mounted letters are more than 2 feet high and do not meet the standard.

Sign Design, Coloring and Materials. Use simple shapes, such as rectangular or oval signs. The Commission recommends painted wood or metal signs with matte finishes for all signs; plastic, reflective materials, and unfinished surfaces are not allowed. Limit the colors used in a sign to no more than three. For sites with multiple signs, all signs should have corresponding or matching designs, coloring and materials. Signs should match or complement the existing color scheme of the building to the maximum extent feasible.

The proposed project includes an aluminum sign and vinyl letters.

Lettering. No more than two typefaces are allowed. Avoid lettering which appears too contemporary in the sign.

The proposed signs include one typeface.

Lighting. Lighting must be indirect, and may be accomplished through shielded incandescent lights attached to the top of the sign, "halo" lighting, or recessed can lighting in awnings. Internally-lit cabinet signs are not allowed for signs on historic buildings or within the historic districts.

Not applicable.

Neon Signs. Neon signs are prohibited on pre-1950 building facades; an exception may be made for existing pre-1950 neon signage, or with photographic proof of a historic (pre-1950) neon sign on the building, but only if the neon sign does not detract from the historic character of the building or area. The Commission may consider limited neon on a post-1950 façade, but encourages backlit neon over exposed neon.

Not applicable.

Sign Placement. Flush-mounted and projecting (blade) signs should be positioned near the business entrance immediately above the principal entry to the business. Single-tenant signs are not allowed over doorways serving multiple tenants. As required by the city land development code, the bottom of the sign shall be a minimum of nine (9) feet above the sidewalk. When feasible, place signs to align with others in the block. Signs should not obscure or cover architectural elements, such as windows, decorative banding, or other ornamentation.

The proposed signs flank the business's principal entry; the existing sign is located directly above the doorway. The signs do not obscure architectural elements.

Sign Mounting. New signs should utilize existing mounting apparatus whenever possible. If new bolt holes or brackets are necessary for sign installation, care should be taken to ensure that installation does not damage historic building materials in any way. Bolting through mortar joints avoids damage to historic stone or brick.

The blade sign will be mounted in mortar joints, not brick. The vinyl letters will be applied to the bricks using heat.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Not reviewed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Deny the proposal, as it exceeds the number of allowable signs by two. If the Commission elects to approve the full proposal or the vinyl letters, staff recommends ensuring that the heat mounting will not damage the historic brick façade.