

STAFF REPORT: 12-09-2020 MEETING

PREPARED BY: A. DYE

APPLICATION NUMBER: 20-6970

ADDRESS: 8122 KERCHEVAL (8116 KERCHEVAL/THE KERCHEVAL 3)

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WEST VILLAGE

APPLICANT: DONNA HOLKE, INNERCITY NEON/CARL GIORDANO, MUMMA MARIA'S HOUSE

PROPERTY OWNER: KERCHEVAL 3 LLC

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 11/24/2020

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 12/03/2020

SCOPE: NEON SIGN

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Colonial Revival-style houses at 8116, 8122, 8126-8130 were combined to one parcel in 2017 and are generally known as The Kercheval 3. The Commission reviewed the rehabilitation of the three properties, which included a deck spanning the front of the three buildings, at its February and August 2017 meetings. The tenant for the center building's basement and first floor is Mumma Maria Enterprises, an Italian restaurant. In January 2020 the Commission approved alterations to the 2017-approved rehabilitation of the central building so that this space can accommodate the new restaurant.



In September, the applicant submitted a proposal for a non-illuminated 18" h x 60" w wood panel sign, which is to be affixed to the deck fascia. Staff recently issued a COA for this sign through an ePlans submission.



18" x 60" non-illuminated sign panel mounted to deck fascia

PROPOSAL

The applicant is currently proposing to install a 26" x 30" clear acrylic panel neon sign (neon color: red). It is proposed to be placed in the upper sash of the center bay window.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- It is staff's opinion the proposed sign meets the Commission's Sign Guidelines as it is minimally styled, has a single color, has a compatible shape for the window opening, and will not obscure architectural elements.
- The use of neon signs on residential-turned-commercial buildings is not new. The location of this property faces Kercheval, a highly traveled road with many commercial-facing buildings. It is staff's opinion this sign will not be out of place in this location.
- As this development has a large deck that not only spans the front of the three buildings, it also takes up much of the front yard space. Sign locations for commercial tenants is limited.

ISSUES

8122 Kercheval – Neon Sign

- Additional specifications for the sign were not submitted, such as the brightness/lumens, whether it will blink or be solid in color, and if it will remain illuminated 24 hours a day.

8116 – 8130 Kercheval

- During the summer of 2018 the property owners installed vinyl windows without a Certificate of Appropriateness. At the February 2020 meeting the Commission denied the installation of the vinyl windows. The Commission agreed to suspend enforcement of this violation until June 11, 2020 to provide an opportunity for the owner to develop a proposal to correct the work done in violation. An application was to be submitted to HDC staff on or before May 22, 2020 (so that it could be reviewed at the June 10, 2020 HDC meeting).
- At the end of May, the property owner contacted HDC staff with a request that the Commission reconsider their denial. Staff explained the Commission would not (and could not) rescind a denial. The only option for an applicant is to appeal the Commission's decision, however the 60-day window to appeal this decision had already passed.
- Ms. Ross and Ms. Dye had a phone conversation with the owner in June to state the only action that could be considered by the Commission was some type of mitigation of the vinyl windows. The HDC has not received an application from the property owner.

RECOMMENDATION

It is staff's opinion the neon sign will not result in the removal of historic materials nor alter the features and spaces that characterize the property. Additionally, the installation can be removed with no impact to the form or integrity of the property and its environment. Staff therefore recommends the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness as the proposed work meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Photos taken by HDC Staff, December 3, 2020 – Yellow circles denote proposed neon sign location







ALL SIGNS U.L. LISTED &
COMPLY WITH U.L. 2161



26" x 30" clear acrylic panel with neon mounted
inside window mullion. Powered by standard plug

Mumma Maria's House
8122 Kercheval
Detroit, MI

DRAWING APPROVED: _____

DATE: _____

11-5-2020



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