



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 5/4/2020
Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4
Staff reviewer: Tim Askin
PTS #114951 CCF #191940

Property	814 W. WISCONSIN AV.	Milwaukee Public Library (& Museum)
Owner/Applicant	CITY OF MILW 809 N BROADWAY MILWAUKEE WI 53202	Lemberg Signs & Lighting 4085 N 128th St Brookfield, WI 53005 Phone: (262) 781-1500
Proposal	Reconfigure existing monument sign. Remove modillions (brackets) and install nearly full-width color changeable message board on each side. The sign cabinets are approximately square at 3'3" x 3'5" and 7" thick.	
Guidelines	F. Signs The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building based upon the Commission's review of scale drawings of the proposed design and samples of the proposed materials and colors. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions.	
Staff comments	<p>To staff's knowledge, this body has only approved this type of signage for the Avalon Theater, which is one of three movie theaters that we regulate. There first is a policy question as to whether we want to allow this form of signage at non-theater sites. The library is likely to be a responsible user of such a device, but it would create a significant challenge with other properties then feeling entitled to this kind of signage. It has been requested in other districts, but staff have so far been able to discourage applicants.</p> <p>The present sign appears to post-date 1970. Dated photos were difficult to locate. Staff feels the bigger question is the change in character of the existing sign, which HPC has promoted as an exemplar of sign design for 25 years.</p> <p>The existing sign is carefully crafted with classical proportions and the addition of the new sign board distorts this by removing the brackets, hiding the columns, and creating a thickness incompatible with the character of the bases sign.</p> <p>In theory, staff could support a message board no larger than the current poster display area, but there is a minimum thickness to the color display boxes. The sign structure would have to be substantially rebuilt to accommodate this kind of design. Removing the central core of the current display area to accommodate a smaller sign is an option to consider.</p>	
Recommendation	Recommend HPC Denial	
Conditions		
Previous HPC action		
Previous Council action		