



## Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

### LIVING WITH HISTORY

**HPC meeting date: 06-12-2017**  
**Ald. Robert Bauman District: 4**  
**Staff reviewer: Tim Askin**  
**PTS #112554 CCF #170224**

**Property** 718 E. WELLS ST. Cass – Wells Streets Historic District

**Owner/Applicant** CLARK-WELLS LLC Nikki Schwark  
2832 N SUMMIT AV  
MILWAUKEE WI 53211 Phone: (414) 614-6454

**Proposal** This Italianate style residence was built in 1874 for butcher Henry Manschot and was designed by prominent architect Charles Gombert. It is a rare extant example of his work.

The house is part of the Cass-Wells Historic District, a grouping of eight buildings that represent one of the few intact areas of residential housing in the Yankee Hill neighborhood. The district was listed in the National Register on June 13, 1986 and was locally designated on January 2, 1992.

The buildings in this district were all originally residential when constructed but most have been converted into commercial or office use. The property at 718 E. Wells Street currently houses a spa and salon.

The current sign consists of a small banner supported by two poles that are located between the first story windows.

The owner wishes to install a different sign to help increase business.

The first proposal (August 8, 2016) was not approved by the HPC and the applicant was directed to work with staff and come back with a new proposal. Neither the applicant nor the sign contractor has worked with staff. Staff did send the applicant relevant pages from Good for Business regarding appropriate signs.

The current submittal is almost identical to the submittal in 2016 in terms of overall size, design, and materials. The few changes include:

- Removal of the lightbulbs in the center medallion
- Slight change in the medallion from 24 inches to 22 inches
- A decorative bracket has been designed.
- The sign is now 4 inches thick instead of 10 inches.

The applicant is proposing one of two locations for the current sign submittal. One option is to place the sign between the two first story windows. The second is to place the sign at the height of the second story windows at the west corner of the façade.

Otherwise, the shape of the cabinet sign and the height of the sign, 8 feet tall (96 inches) remains the same. The large scale of the sign and its design incompatibility with the residential scale and style of the building are features that the HPC objected to at the last meeting.

**Staff comments**

The size and style of the sign are not appropriate for the scale of the Italianate building or for the historic district in which it is located. While the design and scale of the new sign might be suitable for a restaurant or larger commercial style building, for example downtown or at the Pabst Complex, it overwhelms the scale of this residential building.

There are appropriate signs in the Cass-Wells Historic District on which the applicant and her designer can base a new design.

**Recommendation**

Recommend HPC Denial

**Conditions****Previous HPC action**

The HPC reviewed this sign at its August 8, 2016 meeting and requested that the owner work with staff on a new design. Aside from correspondence related to today's meeting, staff has only had contact with the applicant once, on December 5, 2016. At that time staff sent the applicant a copy of the page from Good For Business that illustrates signage that is appropriate for 718 E. Wells Street.

**Previous Council action**