



STAFF BRIEF

This document is the staff's comparison of the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Rehabilitation, Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, the Landmark Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 30, Revised Municipal Code) and other applicable adopted area guidelines as applied to the proposed application. It is intended to provide guidance during the commission's deliberation of the proposed application. Guidelines are available at www.denvergov.org/preservation

Project:	#2023-COA-0000080	LPC Meeting:	March 21, 2023
Address:	518 17 th Street – Denver Club Building	Staff:	Krystal Marquez
Historic Dist/DLM:	Downtown Denver Historic District		
Year structure built:	1954		
Council District:	#9 – Candi CdeBaca		
Applicant:	RiNo Sign Works, Willis Wood & Sarah Bullock, Bison Oil & Gas		

Project Scope Under Review:

Upper Story Wall Sign

Staff Summary:

The applicant is proposing a new upper story wall sign at 518 17th Street which is also known as the Denver Club Building. The structure is a contributing structure to the Downtown Denver Historic District and is located at the corner of 17th Street and Glenarm Place.

Per the Designation Application for the Downtown Denver Historic District:

“The 1954 Denver Club Building at 518 17th Street, designed by Raymond Harry Ervin and Robert Berne, was the first modern highrise completed during the redevelopment of Downtown Denver after World War II (Photograph 20). Ervin, who drew plans for over \$50 million worth of buildings in the 1950s, created a twenty-three story International style office building with clean lines and a boxy shape. The skyscraper featured regular ribbons of green-tinted bifold windows and panels of green Mo-sai (a type of precast aggregate and concrete panel created by Denver's Ideal Cement Company) atop a base of polished green granite. The club's seventeenth floor received almost 100 percent glazing and had a promenade to take advantage of the tremendous view. The building contrasted sharply with the lower brick and stone buildings which had previously characterized the downtown. The Denver Club was the first building in the city to sport "bell-bottom trousers" in its reinforced concrete pilings with bell-shaped bases.”

The applicant is requesting one (1) upper story wall sign on the historic structure. The Denver Club Building already has 3 signs for an existing and remaining tenant, Charles Schwab, at the ground level. The applicant recently began to occupy a majority of the building and would like a sign on the structure. The applicant originally proposed 2 different locations for an upper story wall sign and staff felt the existing proposal was the most appropriate location at the side elevation on the brick portion of the structure along the alley and would not damage the main façade of the existing historic structure.

Staff is supportive of the request for this location; but has concerns about the halo lit upper story wall sign on the historic structure as there are not clear and specific design guidelines in relation to lighting of upper story wall signs in the [Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures & Districts](#) and if approved, could set a precedent for upper story wall signs to be lit in the Downtown Denver historic district.

Additionally, upper story wall signs are clearly addressed in the [Design Guidelines for Lower Downtown](#) (Appendix A, 1.10a-1.10e) and are required to be “unlit” whether painted or flush mounted to the structure; additionally this is for all upper story signs in Lower Downtown whether upper story signs are located on contributing structures or non-contributing structures that the signs should be unlit.

Excerpted from Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, January 2016

Standards & Guidelines:	Meets Standards & Guidelines	Comments
<p>6.3 Coordinate signage on buildings with multiple tenants.</p> <p>a. Use a tenant panel or directory sign at first floor level to identify upper-floor tenants.</p> <p>b. Do not use more than three sign types per tenant and/or building if possible.</p> <p>c. Coordinate sign locations, types and sizes to create consistency in business identification among multiple tenants.</p> <p>d. Do not use projecting signs for upper-story tenants.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>6.3.b states “not to use more than 3 sign types per tenant/and or building if possible”; the applicant is proposing only 1 sign type and sign for the building at the upper level.</p> <p>However, the ground floor of the structure already has 3 signs at the ground level for 1 tenant. The addition of this sign would add a 4th sign, but at the upper level of the building.</p>
<p>6.4 Locate signage on a commercial building consistent with traditional signage patterns.</p> <p>a. Locate signs at the pedestrian first-floor level of the building at or near the business entry.</p> <p>b. Place a sign above or near the primary entrance to an establishment, preferably in a traditional location such as a historic sign band or in large storefront windows.</p> <p>c. For new buildings, only locate signs above the first floor level if:</p> <p>(1) sign location is integrated into the building’s design, and</p> <p>(2) it is essential to identify a primary tenant, and</p> <p>(3) location is limited to one location per façade, and typically just below roof cornice.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>6.4.c states to locate signs on “new” buildings above the first floor level if they meet the criteria that “(1) the sign is integrated into the building’s design”: this new sign will be located just below the roof line on the brick portion of the side elevation and appears integrated into the design. “(2) the sign is essential to identify a primary tenant”: The new tenant and property owner will occupy most of the building and this will be their only wall sign. “(3) location is limited to one location per façade, typically just below roof cornice”: this sign will be the only upper story wall sign on the structure and will be located just below the roofline.</p> <p>Though this is a contributing historic structure in the district and not a “new” building; staff felt that the modern design of this mid-century structure better fit the style of newer buildings and adding an upper story wall sign near the top of the building rather than at ground level with the other existing signage would help minimize visual clutter on the building.</p>

<p>d. Integrate signage into the architectural design of new buildings, particularly sign bands and canopies at building entries.</p>		
<p>6.10 Locate and design sign illumination to minimize impacts on a historic building and its surrounding context.</p> <p>a. Direct lighting toward a sign from an external shielded lamp if possible.</p> <p>b. Do not use an internally-lit plastic or glowing box.</p> <p>c. Use halo, push-through letters, LED or neon for lighting signs when externally focused lighting is not possible.</p> <p>d. Use a warm temperature of light, similar to daylight.</p> <p>e. Locate the light source for signs so that it is not visible on a building façade.</p> <p>f. Do not install exposed conduit, races or junction boxes on the primary elevation of a building.</p> <p>g. Avoid casting light on adjacent properties or upper-floor residences.</p> <p>h. Use simply designed unobtrusive lamps, such as goose neck lamps or simple contemporary fixtures, for external lighting sources.</p> <p>i. Do not use flashing signs as defined by the Denver Zoning Code or electronic digital readerboard signs (even if not flashing) since these signs are typically incompatible with historic building and district character.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The new upper story wall sign will utilize halo/back lit illumination and will not install exposed conduit, races or junction boxes on the primary elevation of a building.</p>
<p>6.13 Design wall signs to compliment a historic building</p> <p>a. Use wall signs in combination with a projecting sign or window signage.</p> <p>b. Painted, individually lettered or solid backed wall signs made of one or two durable materials, such as aluminum, bronze or high quality man made materials, are generally appropriate.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The upper story wall sign will be constructed of high quality materials and will be painted, individually lettered and made of metal.</p> <p>The wall sign will not project in front of architectural details and will not be internally illuminated. The sign will not exceed 3 ½ inches in depth.</p>

<p>c. When using an existing sign band, provide space between the sign and the sign band border or edge to follow a traditional application.</p> <p>d. When using an existing sign band, keep signage flush to the wall surface.</p> <p>e. Do not design wall signs that project in front of adjacent architectural details, such as a wall band frame.</p> <p>f. Do not use internally lit boxes.</p> <p>g. When designing signs outside of sign bands, signs can have a little more depth, typically up to 3 1/2 inches. Deeper signs often have a clunky appearance and are not subordinate to the architectural details of the structure.</p> <p>i. Mount directory signs for upper-story tenant on wall next to entry providing access to these businesses.</p> <p>j. Design directory signs as flush-mounted unlit or externally lit signs.</p> <p>k. Consider a wall sign at a recessed entry (sign is parallel to wall), particularly when there are limited opportunities for primary signage elsewhere on the building. In these cases:</p> <p>(1) Design well-crafted artful signs, preferably with artful shapes.</p> <p>(2) Do not design signs that cover or significantly obstruct views of architectural features.</p> <p>(3) Light externally if possible. If internal lighting is preferred, use halo lighting with a hidden or unobtrusive light source, and a slender design, generally inches 3 1/2 inches depth or less.</p>		
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Excerpted from Design Guidelines for the Lower Downtown Historic District

Standards & Guidelines:	Meets Standards & Guidelines	Comments
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<p>1.10b Only a single signature tenant, such as a user which occupies all or the majority of a building, qualifies for upper level signage.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The applicant is a signature tenant that occupies most of the building.</p>
<p>1.10c Only consider upper story signs for contemporary or non-contributing buildings when all of the following apply:</p> <p>(1) Standards 1.10a – b above are met, as well as other Sign Standards and Guidelines in this Appendix,</p> <p>(2) Proposal is for an unlit flush-mounted or painted wall sign,</p> <p>(2) Sign design is integrated into a building’s architecture,</p> <p>(3) Limited to primary elevation(s), with a maximum of 1 sign per building (or major building component),</p> <p>(4) Signage is located just below the roof line consistent with the district’s historic character, and</p> <p>(5) Signage is of simple design and minimal size needed to provide readable signage within the district.</p>	<p>Yes/No</p>	<p>The proposal is for a flush mounted wall sign; however it is proposed to be halo lit.</p> <p>The sign is integrated into the building’s architecture and with a maximum of 1 per building and is located just below the roofline of the structure on a side elevation along the alley. The sign is simple in size and minimal in design.</p>

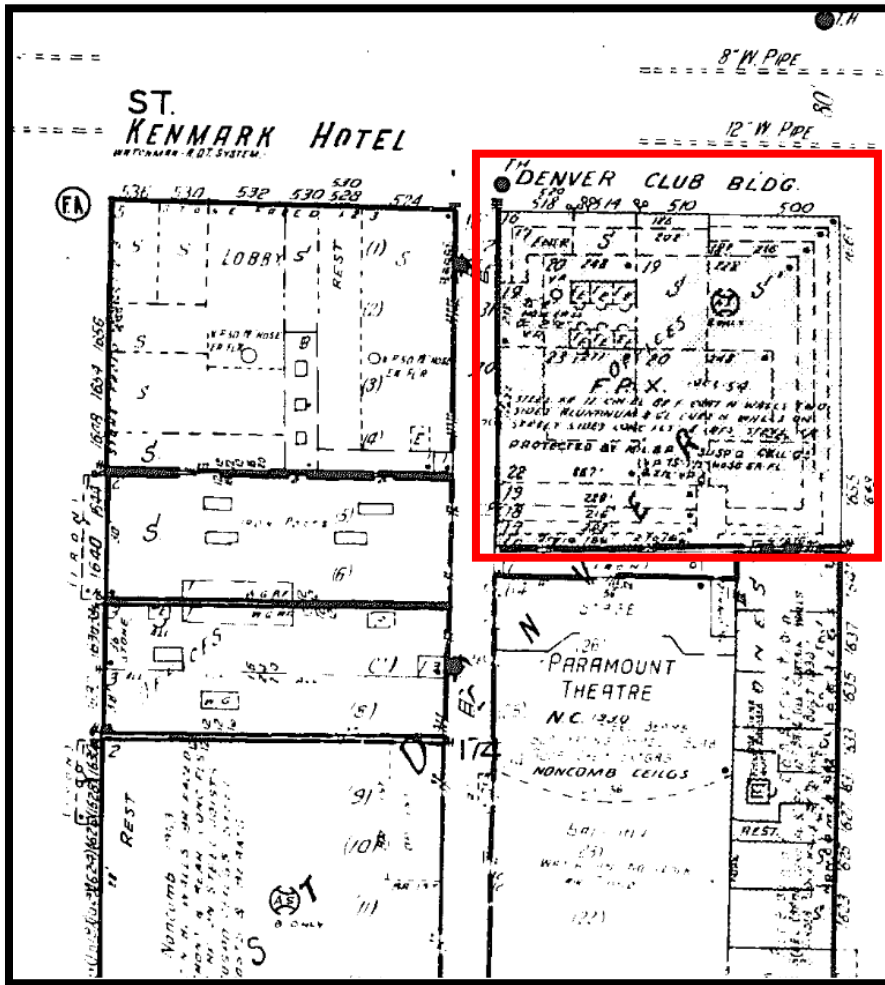
Recommendation: APPROVE WITH CONDITION

Basis: The proposed upper story wall sign generally meets the Design Guidelines for Signage.

Suggested Motion: I move to APPROVE of application #2023-COA-000080 for the upper story wall sign at 518 17th Street, as per design guidelines, 6.3, 6.4, 6.10, 6.13, presented testimony, submitted documentation and information provided in the staff report with the following condition:

- 1. The upper story wall sign shall be unlit.**

1962-67 Sanborn Map with 518 17th St outlined in red



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