

**HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION REPORT**  
Certificate of Appropriateness- Downtown Commercial Historic District.  
Section 115-320(d)(2)

**TO:** Heritage Preservation Commission  
**FROM:** Planning Staff  
**MEETING DATE:** April 27, 2023

**PROPOSAL:** The applicant is proposing to replace two wall signs and one blade sign on the property located at 127 3<sup>rd</sup> Street S.

**PROPERTY/BUSINESS OWNER:**

Qdoba  
C/O Ron Stokes  
127 3rd Street S  
La Crosse, WI 54601

**APPLICANT:**

La Crosse Sign Group  
Carlee Strong

**BACKGROUND:** The Downtown Commercial Historic District was established by Ordinance in April 2016 along with design standards that are specific to the styles of architecture found within. The local district designation of the Downtown Commercial Historic District was created to encourage preservation of the historic resources of the district, which was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The design standards and review procedures are used to guide preservation, rehabilitation, new construction, relocation and demolitions. Plans or requests must be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission prior to any building/demolition permit being issued. In determining whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition, the HPC shall:

1. Consider factors such as whether the structure is of historical significance, the state of repair of the building, and whether denial of a permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.
2. Issue the certificate only if the owner can demonstrate that the building is structurally unsound and/or that denial of a demolition permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The applicant is proposing to remove the wall signs on 3rd Street S and Pearl Street and replace them with new wall signs in the same place. The applicant would also like to remove the existing blade sign located at the corner of the building and replace it with a new one. The new signs are part of the new marketing strategy for Qdoba.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Street wall sign will be 3'-4" in height and 15'-6" in width. It consists of black aluminum panels with a translucent acrylic face that is LED illuminated. It will be attached to the building with aluminum tieback clips and mounting fasteners via a large aluminum plate.

Existing Façade



Proposed Façade



The Pearl Street wall sign will be 2'-0" in height and 9'-5" in width. It consists of black aluminum panels with a translucent acrylic face that is LED illuminated. It will be attached to the building with aluminum tieback clips and mounting fasteners via a large aluminum plate.

The blade sign face will be 4'-0" in height and 3'-0" in length and 8.6" in width and will extend 3'-3" over the public sidewalk. It consists of black aluminum panels with a translucent acrylic face that is LED illuminated. It will be attached to the building via a metal plate and arms protruding from the building.

Existing Façade



Proposed Façade



SEE ATTACHED PLANS FOR MORE INFORMATION

## **ANALYSIS:**

Design standards for signs are:

*Signs* . In historic commercial buildings, signs were typically mounted above storefronts flush with the façade, or projected perpendicularly from the façade. Signs were also placed in windows and appeared on awnings. All of these sign types are appropriate if designed with suitable materials and dimensions. Signs shall be placed where they would have historically been placed, and shall not cover significant architectural features or ornamentation.

- a. Sign installation shall be reversible - that is, it should leave no trace on the building after the sign is removed.
- b. Sign colors shall be compatible with those of the building; a limited palette of no more than four colors should be used.
- c. Traditional materials (wood and metal) are appropriate, while plastic is not. Neon signs may be used with the approval of the HPC. Other composite material may be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission.
- d. Modern back-lit fluorescent signs, animated signs, awnings, or electronic billboards and signs with changeable letters are prohibited.
- e. Small free-standing or wall-mounted signs may be used to identify rear entrances or parking areas.
- f. Wayfinding, directional, or upcoming event signs that maintain the historic character of the Downtown may be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission.
- g. All proposed signs must receive a sign permit from the Fire Department - Division of Fire Protection and Building Safety in accordance with [section 111-36](#) of the Municipal Code

The proposed signs are intended to be installed where the existing signs are currently located. They will not physically impair any significant architectural features nor visually impair any portion of the storefront. They are constructed of aluminum panels which is an appropriate material. The signs faces are a composite material (acrylic) which will have to be approved by the Commission. The sign is back lit with LED lighting not fluorescent.

**FINDING:** The proposed sign is in conformance with the Downtown Historic District Design Standards. The composite sign face material must be approved by the Commission.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION BY STAFF:** This Certificate of Appropriateness is recommended for approval with the condition that it is approved by the Community Risk Management Department.