

AN ORDINANCE to create Section 111- of the Code of Ordinances of the City of La Crosse regarding ghost signs.

THE COMMON COUNCIL of the City of La Crosse do ordain as follows:

SECTION I: Subsections 111- is hereby created:

Sec. 111- –Ghost Signs.

- (1) *Purpose and intent.* The purpose of this section is to define ghost signs and establish restoration standards for those that reside on locally designated structures, within Locally Designated Historic Districts defined in Chapter 20, or those that have been designated as historic artifacts themselves.
- (2) *Definitions.* The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this Section, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:
 - a. *Ghost sign means* a faded sign that was hand painted directly on the exterior surface of a building, which is historic in nature and character in the way that the sign contains language and/or symbols that communicate cultural activities of the community, provide evidence of the history of the use of the building on which it is present, or that advertise a product, service or event that has historical significance to the community.
 - b. *Restoration* means the process of enhancing ghost signs to mimic the aesthetic of the sign in its original state, through detailing only as necessary to maintain or return the sign to legibility.
 - c. *Removal* means the act of intentionally eradicating any or all aspects of a ghost sign.
 - d. *Designated means* a historic structure, district, site, or artifact that has been registered as historic by the Heritage Preservation Commission.
- (3) *Standards of ghost sign restoration.*
 - a. No owner or person in charge of a designated structure on which a ghost sign is present shall remove or restore it unless a Certificate of Appropriateness has been granted by the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) or the Heritage Preservation Planner (HPP). The Community Risk Management Department shall not issue a permit for any such work unless approval has been granted by the HPC or the HPP. If work begins prior to obtaining the necessary permit or permission, a Stop Work Order may be issued by the Community Risk Management Department.

- b. *Review of restorative work.* Upon the filing of a complete application for restorative work on a locally designated structure, the HPC shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness or deny the application within 45 days of the filing of the application, unless the time period is otherwise extended by written agreement between the HPC and the applicant. Restorative work includes the following and is further defined by the HPC in its application instructions: cleaning, removal, re-painting, and coating of signs, as well as applying masonry finishing and repointing of mortar joints.

- c. *Eligibility.* The ghost sign intended for restoration must meet one or more of the following criteria to be eligible for application:
 - i. It is faded to a point in which full words, phrases or symbols within the design are incomplete or illegible.
 - ii. The paint is severely chipping or there is evidence of severe deterioration to the paint.
 - iii. The structure underneath the ghost sign is compromised and is or will be undergoing repair.

- d. *Application requirements.* Any application for restoration of a ghost sign must be reviewed by the HPP or HPC and should include the following:
 - i. A detailed description and photo documentation (if possible) of the eligible ghost sign.
 - ii. A detailed description of the intended restorative work, including the materials and process that are intended to be used.
 - 1. The details of the sign must be accentuated in a way that follows the style of the original artist, accenting only the necessary areas to reproduce the original image.
 - a. When there is evidence of multiple layers of ghost signs, the most prominent image shall take precedent and be the focal point of the restoration.
 - 2. The paints, coatings and/or sealants used in the restoration of a ghost sign must be sympathetic in color to those of the original.
 - i. A material waste plan.
 - ii. If the sign intended for restoration is on a structure that was built before 1978, the individual(s) who will perform the restoration must prove their certification in lead-safe work practices to the extent possible as directed by the Environmental Protection Agency.

- iii. When there is evidence of deterioration of the structure underneath a ghost sign, the walls and other masonry features in the affected area shall be repaired before any additional restorative actions may take place.
 - 3. Brick, stone and mortar should be replaced with the materials used in original construction or materials that closely resemble the original.
 - 4. Repointing of mortar joints should match the original brick and mortar joint profile, including width and depth. Mortar should duplicate the original in color, texture, and strength. Mortar mixtures should duplicate the original composition in lime, sand, and cement proportion.
- e. A ghost sign will be deemed eligible for restoration once the HPC or Heritage Preservation Planner issues a Certificate of Appropriateness to the applicant or approves the application.
- f. Removal of any aspects of a ghost sign is prohibited, with the exception of removal of severely chipped areas of a sign which is being restored.

Sec. 111- [REDACTED] --Should any portion of this ordinance be declared unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this division shall not be affected.

Sec. 111- [REDACTED] --This ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its passage and publication.