

JOHN COOPER  
MAYOR



**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY**

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission  
Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
3000 Granny White Pike  
Nashville, Tennessee 37204  
Telephone: (615) 862-7970  
Fax: (615) 862-7974

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**  
**1121 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North (515 Madison St)**  
**August 18, 2021**

**Application:** Signage

**District:** Germantown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay

**Council District:** 19

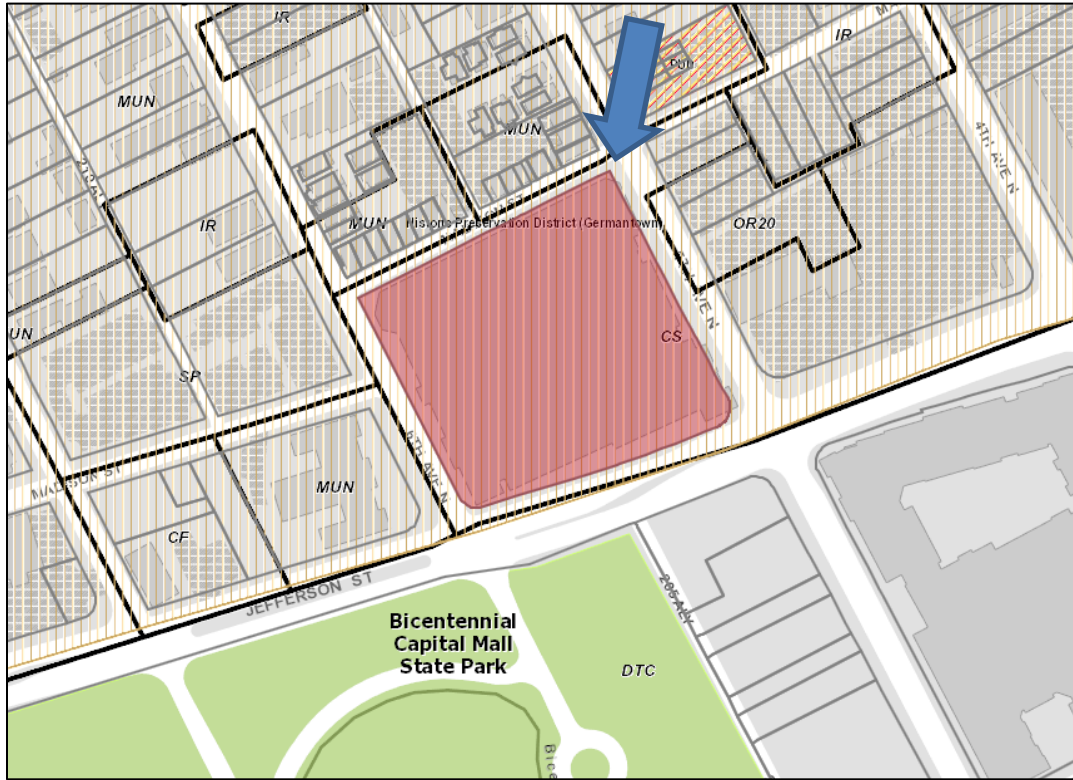
**Map and Parcel Number:** 08213019900

**Applicant:** Emily Kuykendall, Joslin & Son Signs

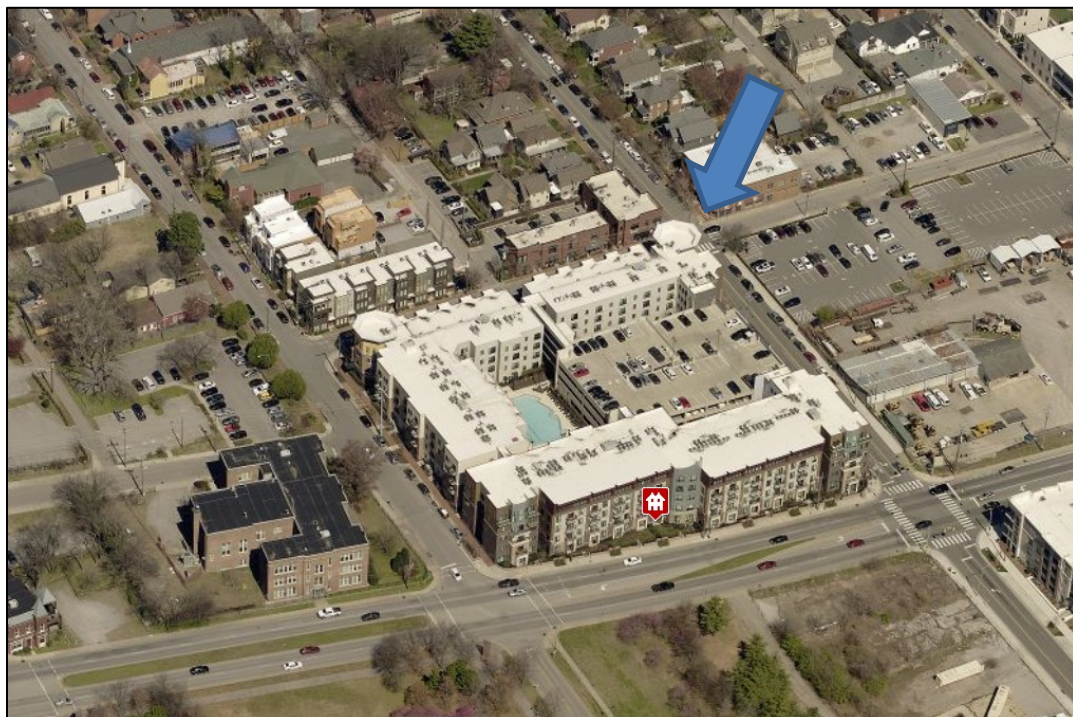
**Project Lead:** Robin Zeigler, robin.zeigler@nashville.gov

<p><b>Description of Project:</b> An administrative permit was issued for a wall sign that does not meet the design guidelines and the permit was rescinded. The request to retain the neon wall sign was disapproved by the Commission in July of this year. The applicant now proposes frosted polycarbonate caps to meet the design guidelines for a cabinet sign and to obscure the exposed neon.</p> <p><b>Recommendation Summary:</b> Staff recommends approval of the addition of frosted polycarbonate caps over the existing channel letters for the sign at 515 Madison; finding that the project meets section VI of the design guidelines for signage in the Jefferson Street subdistrict of the Germantown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay.</p>	<p><b>Attachments</b> <b>A:</b> Drawings</p>
---	--

**Vicinity Map:**



**Aerial Map:**



## Applicable Design Guidelines:

### VI. SIGNAGE

#### A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

*Where a sign is proposed to encroach into the public right-of-way an application shall also be made with the Public Works Department. The requirements of the Public Works Department available at their website: [www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Developer-Services.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Developer-Services.aspx), in addition to the MHZC submittal requirements.*

1. For properties in the Rosa L Parks Blvd. Zone signage requirements shall be the same regulations as those that govern the opposite side of the street but are not located in the Germantown HPZO.
2. Buildings with multiple tenants or the possibility of multiple tenants should consider submittal of a sign plan, even if not all signage will be installed immediately, to assure that all tenants have the possibility of signage.
3. The MHZC does not review signage inside a building or sidewalk signage that is removed at the end of each business day.
4. Signs shall be limited to on-premises signs related to the use or business conducted on the same site.
5. A sign shall be brought into compliance with the provisions of these design guidelines if at any time the sign is altered, repaired, restored or rebuilt to the extent that the cost exceeds fifty percent of the estimated replacement cost of the sign (in current dollar value). This does not include a panel change in a non-conforming cabinet sign, which shall be permitted. All permits within any six consecutive calendar months shall be aggregated for purposes of measuring the fifty percent standard. If the alteration or repair is caused by involuntary damage or casualty, the design may be altered or repaired to its pre-damaged condition.
6. A sign may be removed or taken off-site for repair and maintenance. The sign must be returned to the original location within 90 days of removal.
7. Abandoned, deteriorated, or damaged signs and sign posts shall be removed.
8. Signage not permitted:
  - billboards or general advertising signs
  - marquee type signs for announcements of activities taking place at the location (exceptions: churches, schools, and institutional use)
  - rooftop signs
  - Signs promoting off-site businesses
  - pole-mounted
  - signs that are put in motion by the atmosphere

## **B. DESIGN GUIDELINES**

### **1. Signage Allotment**

- a. Maximum square footage per building type, may be divided into multiple signs.  
Low, mid-rise, mixed use and commercial: 1 square foot of sign area is allowed per linear foot of building façade. Measurements for linear feet shall be at grade, on the front of the building. For corner lots, the same amount of signage allotment as allocated to the front, shall be available for the secondary street-facing side of the building.

### **2. Location**

*See additional guidance under “signage type.”*

- a. Signage should be placed in locations historically used for signage on the specific building type it is associated with and should not obscure transoms, columns, cornices, decorative elements, or key architectural features.
- b. Permanent window painted signs are not reviewed if painted on the inside of the glass.
- c. Signs for multiple tenant occupancies/multiple businesses shall be of similar material and design.
- d. Rooftop signage or signage is not appropriate.

### **3. Materials**

- a. All permanent, on-premises signs shall be constructed of a rigid, weatherable material such as hard plastic, wood, MDO plywood, aluminum, steel, PVC, glass, fiberglass, or Plexiglas. Wood or painted metal are preferable materials. On-premises permanent signs shall not be constructed of nonrigid materials including, but not limited to, vinyl, fabric, canvas, or corrugated plastic. The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to approved, permitted canopies, awnings and porticos.

### **4. Signage Illumination**

- a. External light sources shall be placed close to, and directed onto the sign and shielded to minimize glare into the street, sidewalks or adjacent properties.
- b. Projecting light fixtures used for externally illuminated signs shall be simple and unobtrusive in appearance. They should not obscure the sign.
- c. Buildings and signs may be illuminated by remote light sources, provided that these light sources are shielded to minimize glare to adjacent properties.
- d. Lettering may be internally lit or back-lit in all zones except for the National Register zone. For cabinet signs, the background must be opaque. Only text may be illuminated, and a halo of one inch around text logos may be non-opaque.

- e. The following light sources are prohibited:
- Exposed neon
  - Signs that flash, blink, revolve, or race
  - Visible bulbs, luminous paints, or plastics
  - Lighting that changes color
  - Signs with changing and moving lighted images

## A. ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE BY SIGN TYPE

### 1. Wall Sign

A wall sign is attached flat to, or mounted away from, but parallel to the building façade and is appropriate for both commercial and residential building types.

- a. Wall mounted signs should be located between the first and second stories on commercial building types or near front entrances on residential building types.
- b. No portion of a wall sign may extend above the roof line or above a parapet wall of a building with a flat roof.
- c. No portion of a wall sign may extend above the lower eave line of a building with a pitched roof.
- d. A wall sign cannot cover windows or architectural details.
- e. A wall sign can be externally or internally illuminated in accordance with the section on Illumination.

**Background:** 515 Madison Street is the site of a large mixed-use development on the southern edge of the Germantown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay (Figure 1). The development was approved by MHZC in May 2008. The building is in the “Jefferson Street District” of the Germantown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay. Staff have received complaints from neighbors regarding a neon sign installed on one corner.



Figure 1: View of the site from the Jefferson Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North intersection

## Analysis and Findings:

**Building Type:** The subject property is located in the Jefferson Street sub-district, and the building type is mixed use as it includes multi-family residential and commercial uses. There is only one historic building located around this development, which is the Elliott School located on the opposite corner from the sign, at 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and Jefferson.

**Wall Sign:** A wall sign was requested above an entrance at the corner of Madison and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and a permit issued. The location (above the entrance) and size (20.6 sq ft) meet the design guidelines. In general, the materials meet the design guidelines but not the form of illumination, which is channel letters with neon. In response, permit #2021029639 was issued administratively for an “internally illuminated wall sign,” a type of sign that is allowed in this subdistrict; however, the plans provided a note that the sign has neon. The type of illumination was missed by staff, and the permit was issued erroneously. The permit required an inspection prior to installation but the applicant did not call for the inspection. This inspection is typical of all sign permits so that the sign can be measured and checked prior to installation. This inspection would have been an opportunity to catch the error, prior to installation.



Figure 2: Sign above entrance.

Based on advice from Metro Legal, the permit was rescinded, and a notice was sent to Visual Image Group and Vista Germantown Apartments on June 11, 2021. Ms. Zeigler and Mr. Smith with Visual Image Group also discussed the matter twice on the phone, which included a discussion on several options. The applicant requested to keep the sign as-is at the July 2021 MHZC public hearing. The Commission’s unanimous decision was to bring the sign into compliance with the design guidelines.

The applicant now proposes to retain the sign and place over each letter a clear polycarbonate face with a frosted film. Section VI (4) (d) of the design guidelines states that, *For cabinet signs, the background must be opaque. Only text may be illuminated, and a halo of one inch around text logos may be non-opaque.* In the proposed scenario, there would not be one large cabinet with an opaque background as each letter is a channel letter. Staff finds this solution to be less intrusive than creating a cabinet around the entirety of the sign and to meet the requirements. Since the neon illumination would be covered with the frosted plastic, the solution meets Section VI (4) (e) as the neon would no longer be “exposed” and just serve as an internal light source.

**Recommendation:** Staff recommends approval of the addition of frosted polycarbonate caps over the existing channel letters for the sign at 515 Madison; finding that the project meets section VI of the design guidelines for signage in the Jefferson Street subdistrict of the Germantown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay.

**EMMY SQUARED PIZZA**

1121 5TH AVE N.  
NASHVILLE, TN 37208

DRW#\_ 210818-S10

QUOTE#\_ 102713

WK\_ORD#\_ -----

DESIGNER\_ M. CLINE


PROJ\_MGR\_ M.SHEA

DATE\_ 08.09.21

**COLORS & FINISHES:**

 CLEAR POLYCARB

 BLACK TRIM CAP

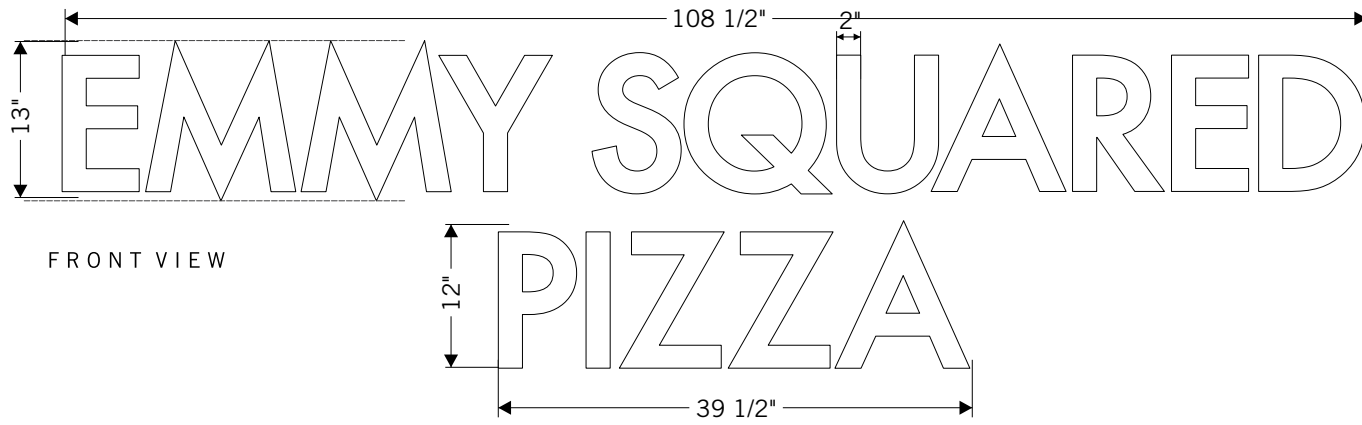
 3M DOVER WHITE  
3630-111

REV#\_ -----

**COPYRIGHT © 2021**

ALL PRINT AND ELECTRONIC ART REMAINS THE SOLE  
COPYRIGHTED PROPERTY OF JOSLIN SIGNS, INC. AND  
ARE NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED, COPIED, E-MAILED OR  
TRANSFERRED IN ANY WAY WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN  
RELEASE FROM JOSLIN SIGNS, INC.

# CHANNEL LETTER CAPS FOR EXISTING LETTER SET



## ONE (1) SET REQUIRED

SCALE: 3/4" = 1'0

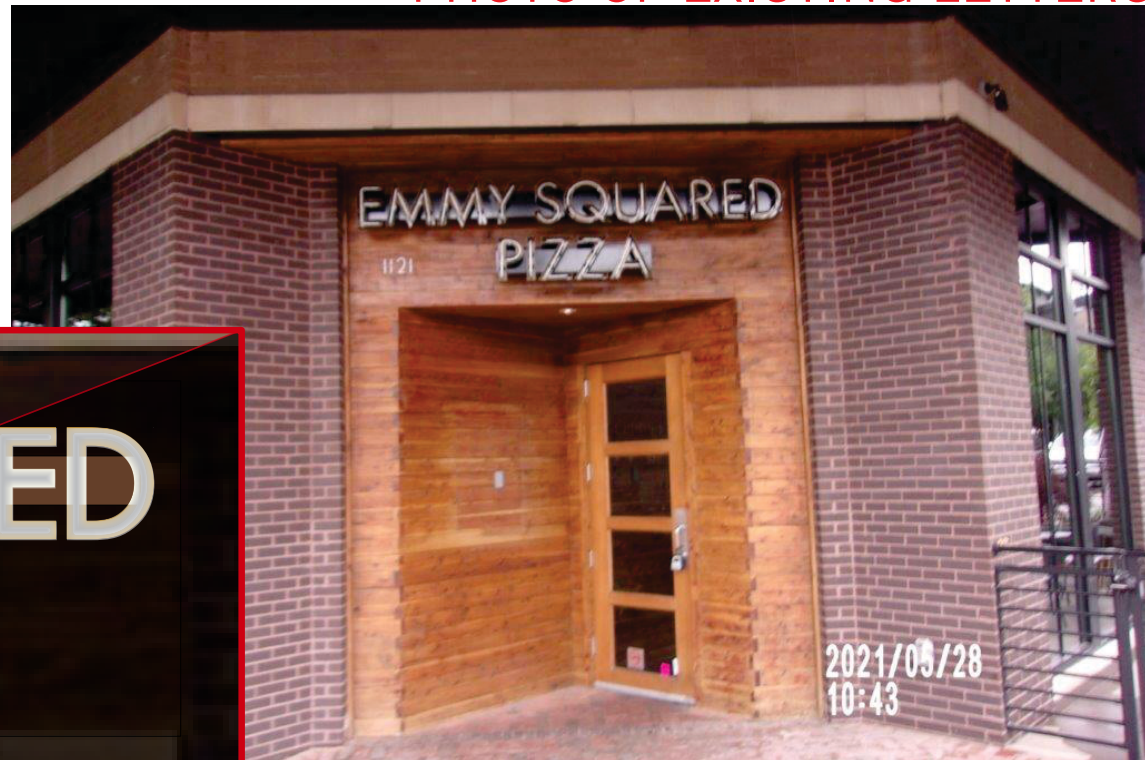
CLEAR POLYCARB FACES TO MATCH EXISTING LETTER SET.

POLYCARB TO BE DECORATED WITH:

3M DOVER WHITE 3630-111 LIGHT MANAGEMENT FILM.

LETTERS TO HAVE 1" BLACK TRIM CAP.

## PHOTO OF EXISTING LETTERS



### SIMULATED DAY VIEW

**EMMY SQUARED**  
**PIZZA**

### SIMULATED NIGHT VIEW