

JOHN COOPER  
MAYOR



**METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY**

Metropolitan Historic Zoning Commission  
Sunnyside in Sevier Park  
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**  
**Historic Landmark Signage**  
**August 18, 2021**

**Application:** Design Guidelines for Historic Landmark Interior  
**Council District:** All  
**Applicant:** Mary Caroline Roberts  
**Project Lead:** Robin Zeigler, robin.zeigler@nashville.gov

<p><b>Description of Project:</b> Councilmember Roberts, as sponsor for the bill for Historic Landmark Signage (HS) - a new type of historic overlay, requests that the MHZC adopt design guidelines for Historic Landmark Signage.</p> <p><b>Recommendation Summary:</b> Staff suggests recommendation of the new type of overlay and recommends adoption of the design guidelines proposed, finding they are consistent with the Secretary of Interior's Standards.</p>	<p><b>Attachments</b> <b>A:</b> Filed Legislation <b>B:</b> Draft Design Guidelines</p>
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## **Applicable Ordinance:**

### **17.40.410 Powers and duties.**

B.Establishment of Design Review Guidelines. The historic zoning commission shall adopt design guidelines for each historic overlay district and apply those guidelines when considering preservation permit applications. Design guidelines relating to the construction, alteration, addition and repair to, and relocation and demolition of structures and other improvements shall be consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. A public hearing following the applicable public notice requirements of Article XV of this chapter shall precede the adoption of all design review guidelines by the historic zoning commission. Testimony and evidence material to the type of historic overlay under consideration may be considered by the commission in its deliberations.

## **Background:**

In 2016 Council adopted § 17.32.145 for Landmark Signs that provides relief from some signage regulations in instances where a historic or vintage sign is retained or reconstructed. Section 17.32.145 provides an incentive for retaining historic signage, but it does not provide for long term protection.

In 2018 Councilmember Roberts requested a way to protect historic signage. Out of that request came the current proposal (BL2021-843) which is to revise the existing ordinance to create a new type of historic overlay that would both provide the relief from existing signage requirements but also provide long-term protection. There are no properties that have used the existing ordinance (Section 17.32.145 ) so this revision will not affect any current projects.

Sections of the existing ordinance that are not proposed to be carried forward for this overlay are “vintage signs,” and “replica signs.” All existing design related requirements are proposed to be included in the design guidelines and removed from the ordinance. Additional guidance regarding signage is also collected in the draft design guidelines.

Council’s public hearing is expected October 5, 2021.

## **Analysis and Findings:**

The draft design guidelines are based on the Secretary of Interior Standards, meeting section 17.40.410, which requires design guidelines be consistent with the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended.

## **Recommendation:**

Staff suggests recommendation of the new type of overlay and recommends adoption of the design guidelines proposed, finding they are consistent with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards.

## ATTACHMENT A: PROPOSED ORDINANCE

### Ordinance No. BL2021-\_\_\_

#### **An Ordinance to amend Sections 17.36.110, 17.36.120, and 17.40.550 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws relative to historic signage (Proposal No. \_\_\_\_).**

WHEREAS, under Metropolitan Code of Laws § 17.40.410, the Historic Zoning Commission is empowered to recommend the creation of historic overlays; and

WHEREAS, preserving historic signage meets the purpose and intent of an overlay, as outlined in § 17.36.100.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ENACTED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE METROPOLITAN GOVERNMENT OF NASHVILLE AND DAVIDSON COUNTY:

Section 1. That Section 17.36.110 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws is hereby amended by adding a new subsection F as follows:

F. Historic Landmark Signage (HS) District. The boundaries shall be shown on the zoning map or on special overlays thereto that are made a part of this zoning code and noted by name on such maps, in which no signage shall be constructed, altered, repaired, relocated or demolished in whole or in part unless the action complies with the requirements set forth in this title.

Section 2. That Section 17.36.120 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws is hereby amended by adding a new subsection E as follows:

E. Historic Landmark Signage.

1. Signage must meet all of the following criteria to qualify as a Historic Landmark Sign (HS):

a. Materials, technology, and design. The signage must be representative of excellence in a particular period of construction; and/or must be unique in that it demonstrates extraordinary aesthetic quality, creativity or innovation.

b. Integrity. The signage must retain the majority of its character-defining features (materials, technologies, structure, colors, shapes, symbols, text, and/or art) that have historical significance, or are integral to overall sign design, or convey historical or regional context. If character-defining features have been altered or removed, the majority must be potentially restorable to their historic function and appearance.

c. Location. The sign shall not be an off-site sign or billboard, as defined in the Zoning Code.

d. An historic landmark sign must be constructed more than fifty years before the date of application.

2. Sign calculations for a landmark sign:

a. Where the landmark sign does not identify the business occupying the premises and is not used by an owner or occupant of the premises to

advertise a business currently occupying the premises, the landmark sign shall not count against the total allowable sign area for the premises and shall not count against the number of signs allowed for the premises.

b. Where the landmark sign does identify the business occupying the premises or is used or adaptively reused by an owner or occupant of the premises to advertise a business currently occupying the premises, fifty percent of the square footage of the landmark sign shall count toward the total allowable sign area and shall count against the number of signs allowed for the premises.

c. Sign calculations shall be determined and confirmed by the Codes Department.

Section 3. That Section 17.40.550 of the Metropolitan Code of Laws is hereby modified as follows:

The zoning administrator shall not issue any zoning, building or demolition permit for the construction, alteration, repair, demolition or relocation of a building or other structure within ~~HP or HL~~ any historic overlay district, or for the construction, demolition, relocation or additions increasing habitable area of a building or other structure within an NC overlay district, without prior approval of the historic zoning commission.

Section 4. This ordinance shall take effect from and after its final passage, the welfare of the Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County requiring.

Introduced By:

Mary Carolyn Roberts  
Member of Council