

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD AGENDA

October 1, 2024

12:00 PM

Meeting Room A

City-County Government Center

160 South Macy St
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

I. Call To Order

- A. Attendance
- B. Declaration Quorum Present

II. Approval of Minutes

- A. August 6, 2024

III. Project Updates

- A. Historic Signs
- B. Discussion - Sign Guidelines

IV. Adjourn

"The City of Fond du Lac provides equal opportunities and services to all individuals, including those individuals with disabilities."

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD AGENDA
CITY OF FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN
August 6, 2024

Subject:

Effect:

Initiator:

Location:

Recommendation:

ATTACHMENTS:

File Name

DARB_Minutes_8.6.2024.pdf

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

August 6, 2024
12:00 P.M.

Meeting Room A
City-County Government Center

160 South Macy Street
Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL:

Present: Timothy Kent
Fr. Matthew Kirk
Sam Meyer (arrived at 12:22 p.m.)
Shawn Willey

Absent: Chris Smith

Administrative Staff: Dyann Benson, Community Development Director

Others in Attendance: Amy Krupp, Executive Director
Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership

Chair Kent declared a quorum present at 12:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion made by Kirk to approve the minutes of the July 9, 2024 meeting of the Downtown Architectural Review Board.

Seconded by Willey.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Willey
Nay – None

Carried.

PROJECT UPDATES

Historic Signs

Moved to September meeting

Discussion – Sign Guidelines

Moved to September meeting

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

August 6, 2024

Page 2

ACTIONS

47 North Main Street (Cujak’s Wine & Spirits)

Awning

Motion made by Kent to approve the concept of the proposed awning subject to the condition listed below; the actual size of the graphics on the awning will be reviewed as part of the permit process. The project approval is based on findings that the awning complies with the spirit and intent of the Downtown Design Overlay District regulations and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines.

Condition of approval:

1. A permit for the awning is required to include graphic size details.

Seconded by Kirk.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Willey
 Nay – None

Carried.

36 East 3rd Street

Exterior façade alterations and paint

Motion made by Willey to approve the proposed exterior alterations and paint. The project approval is based on findings that the alterations comply with the spirit and intent of the Downtown Design Overlay District regulations and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines.

Seconded by Kirk.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Willey
 Nay – None

Carried.

73 South Main Street (True Fitness)

Wall signage

Motion made by Kirk to approve the proposed wall sign. The project approval is based on findings that the signage complies with the spirit and intent of the Downtown Design Overlay District regulations and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines.

Seconded by Meyer.

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

August 6, 2024

Page 3

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Meyer, Willey
 Nay – None

Carried.

116 North Main Street (Summit Credit Union/ReMax)

Roof

Motion made by Kirk to approve the proposed roof replacement. The project approval is based on findings that the roof complies with the spirit and intent of the Downtown Design Overlay District regulations and the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership Design Guidelines.

Seconded by Meyer.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Meyer, Willey
 Nay – None

Carried.

ADJOURN

Motion made by Willey to adjourn.

Seconded by Kirk.

ROLL CALL VOTE: Aye – Kent, Kirk, Meyer, Willey
 Nay – None

Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 12:27 p.m.

MARGARET HEFTER, CITY CLERK

DB/ss

DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD AGENDA
CITY OF FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN
Historic Signs

Subject:

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Recommendation:

ATTACHMENTS:

File Name

DARB_Memo_-_Historic_Signs.pdf

1878089_FDL_ZoningReviewMemo_Historic_Signs_2024_07_04.pdf

CITY OF FOND DU LAC - Memorandum

Department of Community Development

Date: August 2, 2024

To: Downtown Architectural Review Board

From: Dyann Benson, Community Development Director

Re: Historic Signs

City staff retained the services of MSA Professionals to research a potential sign regulation framework for historic signs within the downtown. The City and DFP have received inquiries regarding sign designs based upon historic signs. Such signs are currently not permitted under the primary sign regulations or the downtown sign regulations.

The attached memo from MSA references an ordinance from Wisconsin Dells. This is **NOT** the proposed regulations. It merely is the proposed framework. While the regulations from Wisconsin Dells are intended to preserve the unique character of their development, the framework would be the basis for creating a historic sign section.

For example, the attached references a “legacy sign” which would be identified as part of the community’s unique character. In a potential code for the City, “legacy” would be replaced by “historic or iconic.” A proposed sign would be determined to be historic after being reviewed against set criteria (similar to the Wisconsin Dells). One of the requirements to qualify for consideration of a historic sign, the property would need to be a contributing property to one of the North or South Main Street Historic Districts. Another consideration could be the year the building was constructed, etc.

The attached is just a **concept** to begin conversations on whether it is appropriate to allow historic sign designs, under what qualifications and whether it is consistent with the spirit and intent of the Downtown Design guidelines.

To: Dyann Benson
From: Steve Tremlett, AICP, CNU-A
Subject: Zoning Code Analysis – Historic Signage
Date: July 7, 2024

MSA looked at potential sign regulations allowing for recreation of “historic” signage that may not follow current sign ordinance due to their authentic representation of a past sign. One example that could be modified for this purpose is the City of Wisconsin Dells “legacy” signage regulations (shown below).

Legacy Signage

The City requested assistance with identifying an option for the signage ordinances to allow recreating historic signage that does not meet the current zoning requirements. MSA supported the City of Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin, in developing an ordinance that allows existing historic signs to remain even if they are not following existing sign requirements through a “Legacy” sign designation. This concept could be utilized with revisions to this code to meet the needs of Fond du Lac by allowing new recreated “Legacy” sign.

EXAMPLE. Section 22.02 of the Wisconsin Dells Sign Ordinance defines Legacy Signs as:

(12) Legacy Signs: a sign designation intended to provide for the preservation of Wisconsin Dells’ unique character, history and identity, as reflected in its historic and/or iconic signs

The full ordinance regarding Legacy Signage is as follows:

- (4) Legacy Signs. The legacy sign designation is intended to provide for the preservation of Wisconsin Dells’ unique character, history and identity, as reflected in its historic and/or iconic signs. An approved Legacy Sign, listed in the Legacy Sign Inventory, is exempted from standards in this ordinance addressing total allowable sign area, location and materials. No applications will be accepted beyond December 31, 2017.
- (a) Designation Criteria. Prior to any sign being designated as a Legacy Sign, the Design Review Committee and the City Council shall find the Legacy Sign satisfies one or more of the following criteria:
- (i) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Wisconsin Dells’ or the State of Wisconsin’s history or cultural heritage.
- (ii) Is associated with the lives of persons important in the past.
- (iii) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values.
- (iv) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in history. (v) The sign exemplifies the cultural, economic and historic heritage of Wisconsin Dells.

- (vi) The sign exhibits extraordinary aesthetic quality, creativity and innovation.

- (b) Application for Designation. Applications for designation shall be submitted by December 31, 2017. It may be submitted by any member of the public or the sign owner and supported by a Legacy Sign Treatment Plan (see subsection (c)). If an application for designation is submitted by a member of the public, written consent from the sign owner is required in order to continue processing the application for designation. Such application shall be made in writing, in a form deemed appropriate by the Zoning Administrator. The application shall include the owner's consent to the designation and agreement to abide by the requirements of this sign ordinance through the execution of a covenant. The Zoning Administrator may require the owner to submit information regarding the significance of the potential Legacy Sign including, but not limited, to photographs, plans, deeds, and any other materials that may provide information regarding the potential Legacy Sign designation. No application will be reviewed until the application fee is paid in full (see Code Sec. 2.05).

- (c) Legacy Sign Treatment Plan. The application for designation as a Legacy Sign shall include a Legacy Sign Treatment Plan. The Legacy Sign Treatment Plan will include the following (but is not limited to):
 - (i) Description of the Legacy Sign, including current address, original address (if different), date of original construction and installation, sign type, original materials, text, type of illumination (if known), and a list of character-defining features.

 - (ii) Historic documentation, including approved permits, site plans, elevations, and dated photographs, as available.

 - (iii) Current photos of the Legacy Sign, including views of all visible elevations as well as contextual images of the property as a whole.

 - (iv) Provide a list of materials and/or parts to be replaced, and recurring maintenance items.

 - (v) Narrative statement of significance against designation criteria in Code Sec. 22.09(4)(a).

 - (vi) Where an applicant produces physical evidence or documentation sufficient to prove that a proposed Legacy Sign included intermittent lighting features (e.g. flashing, blinking, chasing or sequentially lit elements which create the appearance of movement) or moving parts, such sign elements may be repaired or restored conditioned upon a determination by the City that no negative safety issues will result.

- (d) Designation Process. Applications for approval of Legacy Signs shall be reviewed by the Design Review Committee (DRC). The DRC shall determine whether the sign meets one or more of the criteria for

approval as a Legacy Sign and, based on this determination, shall recommend to the City Council that the application be approved or denied. The DRC shall adopt a resolution stating its recommendation, focusing on the criteria set forth in Code Sec. 22.09(4)(a), and incorporating its reasons in support or denial of the application. Following DRC approval recommendation, the City Council shall adopt a resolution to approve or deny the application based on the criteria specified in Code Sec. 22.09(4)(a). A condition of approval may be added to any variance application for a property with a potential legacy sign requiring the property owner to designate and/or restore the potential legacy sign.

- (e) Covenant by Recorded. If the application is approved by the City Council, the City shall record a signed covenant in the office of the County Recorder at the Legacy Sign owner's expense. The covenant, which shall run with the land and be binding on successors and assigns, shall specify which elements of the Designated Legacy Sign are to be protected; and state that any alteration or removal of these elements shall be done in accordance with Code Sec. 22.09(4)(a). This covenant shall serve as notice of the approval as a Designated Legacy Sign, and shall not be removed from the property without the consent of the City Council.
- (f) Design Standards. Legacy signs shall comply with the following requirements (as applicable):
 - (i) Restoration and or repair of an intact or nearly intact Legacy Sign shall be consistent with a documented appearance at the time of approved legacy sign designation.
 - (ii) Restoration and or repair shall not add typographical or other elements which result in an increase in the size of the restored and or repaired sign.
 - (iii) Text changes shall not result in changes to character defining features.
 - (iv) Text changes shall match or be compatible with existing text in material(s), letter size, font/typography, and color.
 - (v) The sign shall use materials and technology representative of its period of construction.
 - (vi) The sign shall be structurally safe or can be made safe without substantially altering its documented appearance at the time of approved legacy sign designation.
 - (vii) Relocation of a Legacy sign off site is discouraged unless it is technologically impractical or otherwise infeasible to maintain the Legacy Sign in the original location. The burden of proof is upon the applicant and shall be to the satisfaction of the Design Review Committee (DRC).

Relocation of a Legacy Sign shall be to a location within the original premises, or to a location deemed appropriate by the DRC.

(viii) A Legacy Sign may be replaced as long as the replacement sign is consistent in look, materials and technologies as the documented appearance at the time of approved legacy sign designation.

(g) Maintenance. The owner, lessees, and any other responsible persons shall take all steps necessary to maintain the Legacy Sign in good condition and to prevent any deterioration or decay that would adversely affect the value or integrity of the Legacy Sign. The Design Review Committee may require annual maintenance inspections of the sign by the building inspector. Failure to maintain the Legacy Sign in accordance with this Section is a violation of the Wisconsin Dells Municipal Code and is subject to loss of legacy sign designation and may be subject to prosecution.

**DOWNTOWN ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD AGENDA
CITY OF FOND DU LAC, WISCONSIN
Discussion - Sign Guidelines**

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Recommendation:

ATTACHMENTS:

File Name

DARB_Memo_-_Design_Guidelines.pdf

1878089_FDL_Signage_Design_Guidelines_Memo.pdf

CITY OF FOND DU LAC - Memorandum

Department of Community Development

Date: August 2, 2024

To: Downtown Architectural Review Board (DARB)

From: Dyann Benson, Community Development Director

Re: Discussion - Sign Guidelines

There has previously been conversation with DARB regarding sign guidelines. City staff retained the services of MSA Professionals to research what other communities do in regards to sign guidelines. It is important to note the difference between sign guidelines and sign regulations. Sign regulations are codified within the Municipal Code and are enforceable through the City's enforcement process, such as municipal citations. Sign guidelines are not detailed within the Municipal Code and are used to provide direction for users on the desired aesthetics and design.

Section 720-42 Downtown Design Overlay District references the Design Guidelines, along with the Comprehensive Plan, as a basis for DARB's review of project within its purview.

The attached memo from MSA references a selection of sign guidelines from three (3) communities. Staff will bring those guidelines up on the monitor during the meeting for discussion purposes. The attached memo summarizes the key findings from MSA's analysis. It is also important to note that the attached analysis should not infer that the existing sign guidelines are inappropriate. Each community and its downtown has its own character, its own aesthetics and its own history.

The purpose of the analysis was to provide an opportunity to have an outside entity, MSA, take a look at guidelines and offer possible suggestions for enhancement if DARB and the DFP feel that the existing guidelines are not achieving the desired results.

To: City of Fond Du Lac
From: Steve Tremlett, AICP, CNU-A
Subject: Signage Design Guidelines Review
Date: August 1, 2024

MSA reviewed City of Fond du Lac's Design Guidelines and compared it against guidelines in peer communities. We looked at potential improvements to the current design guidelines to preserve the "historic" character of the city, notably by focusing on signage design standards for communities with prominent historic main streets or downtown areas. This memo presents a comparison of Fond Du Lac's design guidelines with other peer cities, such as Wisconsin Dells, Beloit, Fitchburg, and Stoughton.

Peer Communities

Most comparable communities offer more comprehensive and specific recommendations for each type of signage. Fond du Lac, on the other hand, provides general signage guidelines that primarily focus on Wall and Projecting Signs, without going into much detail for each type. The communities mentioned below offer more technical information and are generally structured cleaner to navigate to specific elements.

The following is a comparison that highlights key strategies found in these communities but absent from the current Fond du Lac guidelines. These communities all have a similar historical downtown/main street character and feel.

Beloit

https://downtownbeloit.com/us/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/56030_DBA-Book-2016-3-17.pdf

The City of Beloit has signage guidelines as part of its Downtown Beloit Design Guidelines. These guidelines are thorough and user-friendly, offering two pages of straightforward suggestions, supplemented by a collection of photos, a section providing advice on goal attainment, and a list of common mistakes to avoid. This guideline delivers a comparable volume of information to the Fond Du Lac signage guidelines, but with more precise and/or technical recommendations concerning signage design. The following are some topics/recommendations provided by the Beloit Design Guideline that could be beneficial additions to the current Fond Du Lac Guidelines.

- **Appropriate Sign Options:** Pinpoints the suitable choices for signage.
- **Awning Signs:** Emphasizes the significance of selecting suitable fonts, without going into specifics.
- **Display Window Lettering:** In places like Wisconsin Dells and Beloit, it specifies the proportion of letter coverage, and outlines the material and style of the lettering.
- **Hanging Signs:** In a similar vein, it underscores the projection distance, ideal placement, and lighting type.
- **Neon Usage:** Its application is limited and subject to individual approval.
- **Murals:** The design should lean towards artistic or historical themes rather than commercial ones.
- **Temporary Signs:** Offers additional guidance, for instance, on the dimensions of sandwich boards.
- **Common Mistakes:** Includes a section that sheds light on frequent errors.

MEMO

August 1, 2024

Fitchburg

<https://www.fitchburgma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/10259/2022-Sign-Design-Guidelines?bidId=>

The City of Fitchburg has Design Guidelines under Exterior Signs. These guidelines are thorough, and well organized, with clearly labeled sections and subsections. This guideline delivers more detailed information compared to the Fond Du Lac signage guidelines. The following are some topics/recommendations that could be further enhance the current Fond Du Lac Guidelines.

- Emphasizes the necessity for storefronts in a row to maintain uniformity in signage size, material, proportion, and location on the building. Similarly, the use of sign bands is advocated in comparable situations.
- The guideline identifies the various types of signs present on the main street.
- It offers a set of general suggestions, such as installing one primary and one secondary sign, and then proceeds to provide specific recommendations for each type of signage.
- In certain instances, the guidelines specify the appropriate signage based on land use and building typology. For instance, the use of ground signs is encouraged for businesses housed in residential buildings.
- The guidelines feature clearly labeled subsections under each signage type, including types, size & placement, and lettering, making it easier to navigate.
- The guidelines offer more detailed instructions and elaborate details on placement and size.
- Each section begins with a brief introduction that explains the use, purpose, and visibility range of each sign. This information could provide additional clarity for the user and could influence their design decisions.
- The guidelines underscore the importance of elements like brackets as part of the design.
- The guidelines offer a set of technical data for wall signs, projecting signs, window signs, and awning/canopies.
- The materials section clearly specifies which material should be used where. For instance, the use of plastic is recommended for lettering. This approach could eliminate confusion, as some materials could be suitable for some and not all signage elements.
- Awning: The guidelines address the situation of a single business occupying multiple bays to ensure a pleasant pedestrian experience.
- The guidelines include a page listing prohibited signs, with references to the corresponding zoning ordinance.

Stoughton

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13KpVksO4FyGHC7BCw3k5LFro88Ws0Ag8/view>

The Historic Downtown District Design Guidelines present a unique example. Despite the fact that the guidelines are very concise and not comprehensive, they touch on key and important factors typically overlooked in other guidelines. Below are important notes that could complement the current Fond Du Lac guidelines.

- The guidelines note that some signage types, such as rooftop signs, are not permitted because there is no evidence that they are historic to the district.
- Establishes the relationship between and a new sign to an existing historical masonry sign.

Wisconsin Dells

The Wisconsin Dells has a detailed Sign Design Guideline. These guidelines were drafted to remove the touristic “noise” and move towards more historic character. For this purpose, this memo presents below some of the guidelines that could feed into the current Fond Du Lac signage guidelines.

MEMO

August 1, 2024

- Wisconsin Dells guidelines clearly define the number of signs per building and reference the zoning ordinance section that determines the allowable number of signage per a certain length of street frontage.
- Fond Du Lac's standards primarily relate to Wall Signs, while Wisconsin Dells provides detailed guidelines for each type of signage separately.
- Some language in the guidelines could be interpreted broadly. For instance, more specific language used in Wisconsin Dells could provide clearer guidance for sign shape and proportion, and color selection.
- Neon is noted as an allowable material in the current guidelines, but its use is discouraged in Wisconsin Dells, allowing it only as a secondary role.
- The guidelines define plastic as one of the allowed materials, while Wisconsin Dells advises the use of stone, wood, and metal.
- More restrictions could be provided on signage lighting, such as discouraging internally illuminated signs and changing color lighting.
- More guidance could be provided on multi-tenant buildings to ensure aesthetic coherence and a unified appearance for all the signs.
- A section on installation is provided in Wisconsin Dell Guidelines, to ensure that the process of installation does not alter any historical elements of the facades.
- More guidelines could be provided for each signage type separately, including projecting signs, wall signs/window lettering, portable boards, and awnings. These guidelines could cover aspects such as clearance, distance of projection, bracing profile and technique, size, location, % of coverage, materials, height, character/style, and the position of the sign on the awning.