

## ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

### Staff Report

**ADDRESS:** 215 S. State Street, Application Number HDC16-124

**DISTRICT:** State Street Historic District

**REPORT DATE:** July 14, 2016

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

**REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE:** Monday, July 11, 2016

#### OWNER

**Name:** Issa Properties  
**Address:** 314 E. Huron  
 Ann Arbor, MI  
**Phone:**

#### APPLICANT

Huron Sign Co  
 663 S. Mansfield Street  
 (734) 483-2000

**BACKGROUND:** This storefront occupies a portion of the Brown House/Foster's House of Art at 213-217 S. State Street. See attached history from *Historic Ann Arbor: An Architectural Guide*.

**LOCATION:** The site is located on the east side of South State Street between East Liberty and East Washington.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks HDC approval to replace an existing plywood sign attached to the wood frame, and install a new neon sign with aluminum background with a raceway for the transformers.

#### APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:

##### From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- (2) The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- (9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

**From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (other SOI Guidelines may also apply):**

## Storefronts

*Not Recommended:* Introducing a new design that is incompatible in size, scale, material, and color; using inappropriately scaled signs and logos or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character-defining features of the historic building; using new illuminated signs.

### From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines (other Guidelines may apply):

#### Signs

*Appropriate:* Installing signage that is subordinate to the overall building composition.

Mounting signs to fit within existing architectural features using the shape of the sign to help reinforce the horizontal lines of moldings and transoms seen along the street.

Installing signage in the historic sign band area of the building, typically the area above the transoms or just above the storefront.

*Not Appropriate:* Installing signs that are too large or that are made from a material that is incompatible with the historic building or district.

### STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The proposed new sign measures 11'6 ½" long by 2'2" feet high (25 square feet). It would replace the existing plywood sign that is mounted to the wooden storefront frame. The new sign will be installed in the same location and position on the storefront. The applicant has indicated the existing sign needs to be replaced due to aging and weathering, and the preference for a lit sign with a vintage look.
2. The proposed new sign is compatible with the building. Staff believes that the overall size, color, texture, and material are appropriate and meet *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, in particular standards 2 and 9, and the guidelines for storefronts, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*.

**POSSIBLE MOTIONS:** (Note that the motion is only a suggestion. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 215 S. State Street, a contributing property in the State Street Historic District, to remove an existing plywood sign and install a new neon sign with aluminum background with a raceway for the transformers. The proposed work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of the building and the surrounding area and meets *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 2 and 9 and the guidelines for storefronts, and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines* for signs.

**MOTION WORKSHEET:**

I move that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work at 215 S. State Street in the State Street Historic District

\_\_\_\_\_ Provided the following condition(S) is (ARE) met: 1) STATE CONDITION(s)

The work is generally compatible with the size, scale, massing, and materials and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, standard(S) number(S) (*circle all that apply*): 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10

**ATTACHMENTS:** application, drawings, photos.

213-217 S State, 2007 Staff Photo



213-217 S State, 1914





**City of Ann Arbor**  
**PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES — PLANNING SERVICES**

301 E. Huron Street | P.O. Box 8647 | Ann Arbor, Michigan 48107-8647  
p. 734.794.6265 | f. 734.994.8312 | [planning@a2gov.org](mailto:planning@a2gov.org)

**ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION APPLICATION**

<b>Section 1: Property Being Reviewed and Ownership Information</b>
Address of Property: <u>215 S. State St</u>
Historic District: <u>State Street</u>
Name of Property Owner (If different than the applicant): <u>Issa Properties</u>
Address of Property Owner: <u>341 E Huron St</u>
Daytime Phone and E-mail of Property Owner: <u>(734) 887-6717, rod@issaproperties.com</u>
Signature of Property Owner: _____ Date: _____
<b>Section 2: Applicant Information</b>
Name of Applicant: <u>Huron Sign Co</u>
Address of Applicant: <u>663 S Mansfield St</u>
Daytime Phone: ( <u>734</u> ) <u>483-2000</u> Fax: ( <u>734</u> ) <u>483-5164</u>
E-mail: <u>kevinshort@huronsign.com</u>
Applicant's Relationship to Property: ___ owner ___ architect <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u>contactor</u> ___ other
Signature of applicant: <u>Kevin Short VP Sales, Kevin Short</u> Date: <u>6/22/2016</u>
<b>Section 3: Building Use (check all that apply)</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Residential <input type="checkbox"/> Single Family <input type="checkbox"/> Multiple Family <input type="checkbox"/> Rental
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Institutional
<b>Section 4: Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act</b> (This item <b>MUST BE INITIALED</b> for your application to be <b>PROCESSED</b> )
Public Act 169, Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, was amended April 2004 to include the following language: "...the applicant has certified in the application that the property where the work will be undertaken has, or will have before the proposed completion date, a fire alarm or smoke alarm complying with the requirements of the Stille-DeRossett-Hale Single State Construction Code Act, 1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501 to 125.1531."
Please initial here: _____

**Section 5: Description of Proposed Changes (attach additional sheets as necessary)**

1. Provide a brief summary of proposed changes. We are replacing the existing wood sign with a neon sign on an aluminum background with a raceway for the transformers.

2. Provide a description of existing conditions. The existing painted plywood sign is attached to the wood frame. We will install the new sign on the same wood and position

3. What are the reasons for the proposed changes? The existing sign needed to be replaced because of age and weathered, with something lit and a vintage look

4. Attach any additional information that will further explain or clarify the proposal, and indicate these attachments here.

5. Attach photographs of the existing property, including at least one general photo and detailed photos of proposed work area.

**STAFF USE ONLY**

Date Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_ Application to \_\_\_\_\_ Staff or \_\_\_\_\_ HDC

Project No.:     HDC     Fee Paid: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-filing Staff Reviewer & Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Public Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_

Application Filing Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Action: \_\_\_\_\_ HDC COA \_\_\_\_\_ HDC Denial

Staff signature: \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ HDC NTP \_\_\_\_\_ Staff COA

Comments:

# Exposed Neon Sign on Raceway

INITIAL DESIGN CONCEPT



11'-6 1/2"



**HURON  
SIGN CO.**

663 S. MANSFIELD  
P.O. BOX 980493  
YPSILANTI, MI 48198  
PHONE 734-483-2000  
1-800-783-0100  
FAX 734-483-5164  
www.huronsign.com



ALL ELECTRICAL SIGNS TO BEAR THIS MARK  
**UL** Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.  
-SUITABLE FOR WET LOCATIONS-  
-EXCEEDS ALL REQUIREMENTS FOR  
ELECTRIC SIGN MANUFACTURERS  
CERTIFIED MANUFACTURER

## WALL PAINTING (BY OTHERS)

# OF SETS	1	RETURN DEPTH	12"	DESIGNER	S WILKIE
FACE COLOR	TBD	TYPE OF INSTALL	GROUND MONUMENT	DATE	06/01/16
RETAINER COLOR	N.A. (BLIND)	TYPE OF FACE	ALUMINUM	JOB NO.	9598
NEON COLOR	TBD	RACEWAY D.	H. L. N.A.	COMMENTS:	JOB NAME GET UP-9598-2
		HOUSINGS	N.A.	SALESPERSON:	KEVIN SHORT
				ADDRESS:	215 STATE ST. ANNARBOR, MI

APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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SCALE 3/4" = 1'

# Exposed Neon Sign on Raceway



SCALE 3/4" = 1'

CURRENT CONDITION



**HURON  
SIGN CO.**

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**UL** Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.  
-SUITABLE FOR WET LOCATIONS- IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEC 600  
ELECTRIC SIGN CERTIFIED MANUFACTURER

# OF SETS	1	RETURN DEPTH	10"	RACEWAY COLOR	TBD	DESIGNER	S WILKIE
FACE COLOR	SEE ABOVE	TYPE OF INSTALL	RACEWAY	TRANSFORMER	9000v SEC / 120v PRI	DATE	06/28/16
RETURN COLOR	N.A.	TYPE OF FACE	ALUMINUM	BALLAST	N.A.	JOB NO.	9598
RETAINER COLOR	N.A.	RACEWAY D. 7" H. 7" L.	130"	COMMENTS:		JOB NAME	GETUP-9598-3
NEON COLOR	TURQUOISE	HOUSINGS	GLASS	SALESPERSON:	KEVIN SHORT	ADDRESS:	215 STATE ST. ANN ARBOR, MI

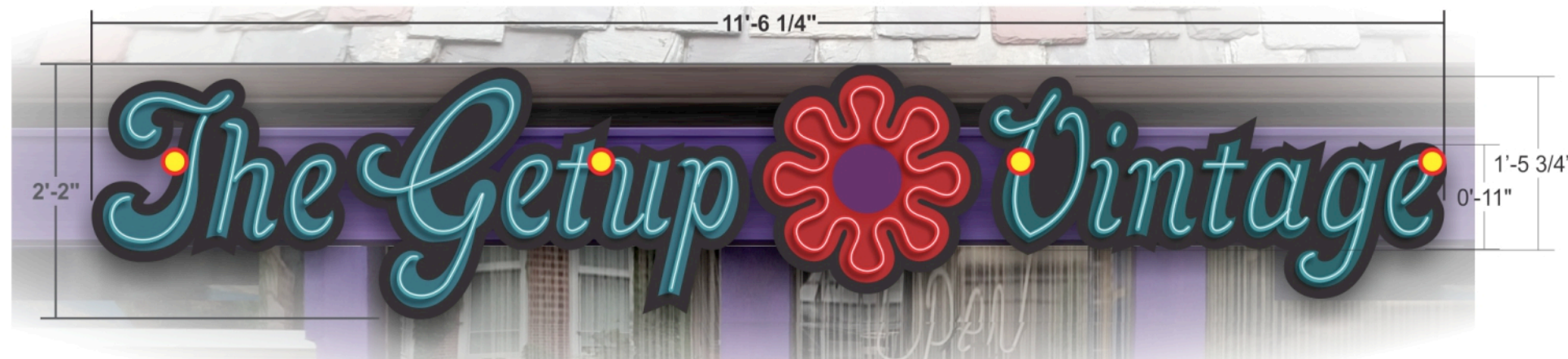
APPROVED BY: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

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# Exposed Neon Sign on Raceway



SCALE 3/4" = 1'

● = INSTALLATION BOLT POSITIONS (4) TOTAL 3/8" X 5" BOLTS & TOGGLES

**20 SQFT**



PMS 7467



PMS 2603



PMS 199

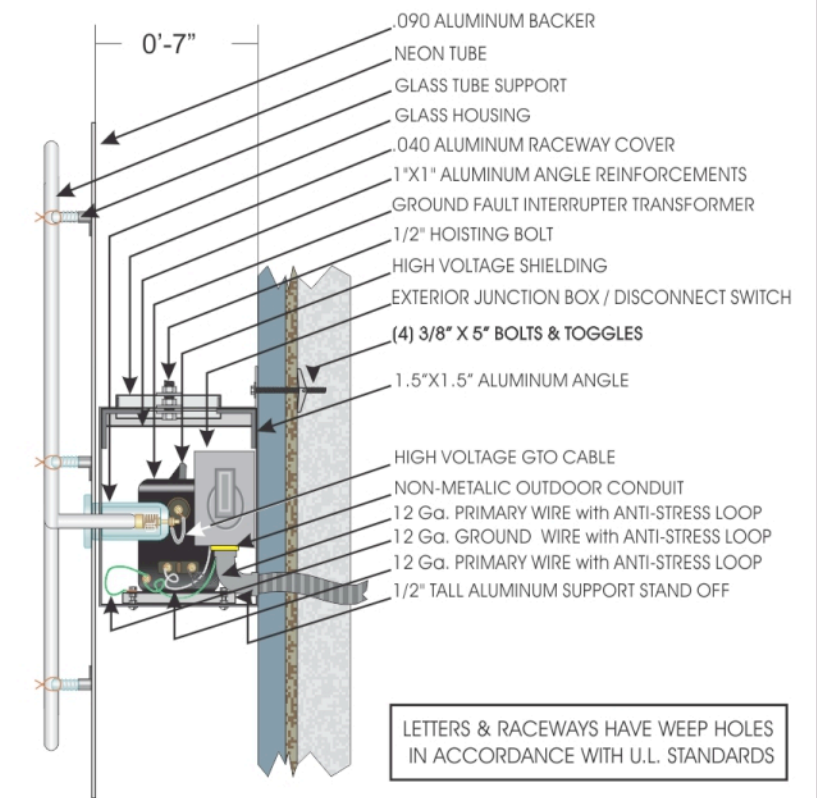


PMS BLACK

NOTE: The colors called out in the rendering do not exactly match the print, to see actual color samples see your sales representative.

BUILD & INSTALL THIS NE CUSTOM EXPOSED NEON WALL SIGN WITH ALUMINUM CONTOUR BACKER. THE BACKER HAS APPLIED VINYL LETTERING BEHIND THE NEON TUBING TO MAINTAIN READABILITY WHEN SIGN IS NOT LIGHTED. THE SIGN IS INSTALLED ON AN ALUMINUM RACEWAY AND ATTACHED TO THE WALL WITH BOLTS & TOGGLES. THE SIGN WILL REQUIRE (1) 20a 120v DEDICATED CIRCUIT (BY OTHERS)

## Cross Section Typical Neon Letter / Backer on Raceway



LETTERS & RACEWAYS HAVE WEEP HOLES IN ACCORDANCE WITH U.L. STANDARDS

NOTE:  
DESIGN BASED UPON 90 MPH, 3 SECOND GUST WIND SPEED AS PER 2015 IBC.

INSTALLATION SHALL CONFORM TO NATIONAL ELECTRIC CODE & U.L. REQUIREMENTS.

THIS INSTALLATION WAS DESIGNED TO BE INSTALLED AT THE ADDRESS SHOWN ON THE LEFT AND SHOULD NOT BE USED AT OTHER LOCATIONS UNLESS DEEMED SUITABLE BY A LICENSED ENGINEER.

ENGINEER'S SEAL



HURON SIGN ©

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213–217 S. State

Brown House/Foster's House of Art

1872/1913

In the mid-19th century, this block of State Street was lined with homes of wealthy businessmen and professors. The set-back part of this building is the last remainder of this residential neighborhood. The visible parts of the second floor show classic features of the Italianate style: double brackets under the eaves, frieze windows in the attic portion with stylized Grecian flowers, windows with peaked caps, and a symmetrical floor plan. The home was built in 1872 by the Hon. Benjamin Brown, an Englishman by birth, emigrant from Rochester, NY, and former state representative. His daughter Mary later married Fred Taylor, a well-known economics professor, and continued to live in Ann Arbor. You can see the original staircase as you enter the building.



By the early 20th century these homes were being converted into doctors' offices and eventually demolished for commercial structures. In 1913, instead of demolition, James P. Foster commissioned University of Michigan Professor of Architecture Emil Lorch to design a commercial addition to the Italianate Brown house.

The addition is in the Arts and Crafts style, reminiscent of some buildings in Chicago and even Scotland. Colorful art glass patterns form the upper register of the front plate-glass windows. They are lovely in the late afternoon when the sun shines through them (despite the awning).

Foster's House of Art was *the* place to buy cutting-edge products in the first half of the 20th century—lamps, furniture, picture frames, china, art, pottery, jewelry, textiles—you name it. They also ran a tea room, lived in the back, and provided housing for girls in the old part of the house. When Mr. Foster died in 1949, his wife Clarice, the artistic one of the duo, put his money into a foundation which is now the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation.

The building later housed a branch of Goodyear's department store, who added a slate roof for a "Normandy" effect, and maintained the tea room for many years. Eventually other shops came and went and it's been home to many restaurants and retail establishments over the years. Today, it maintains the eclectic nature of Ann Arbor businesses.

SSHD

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