

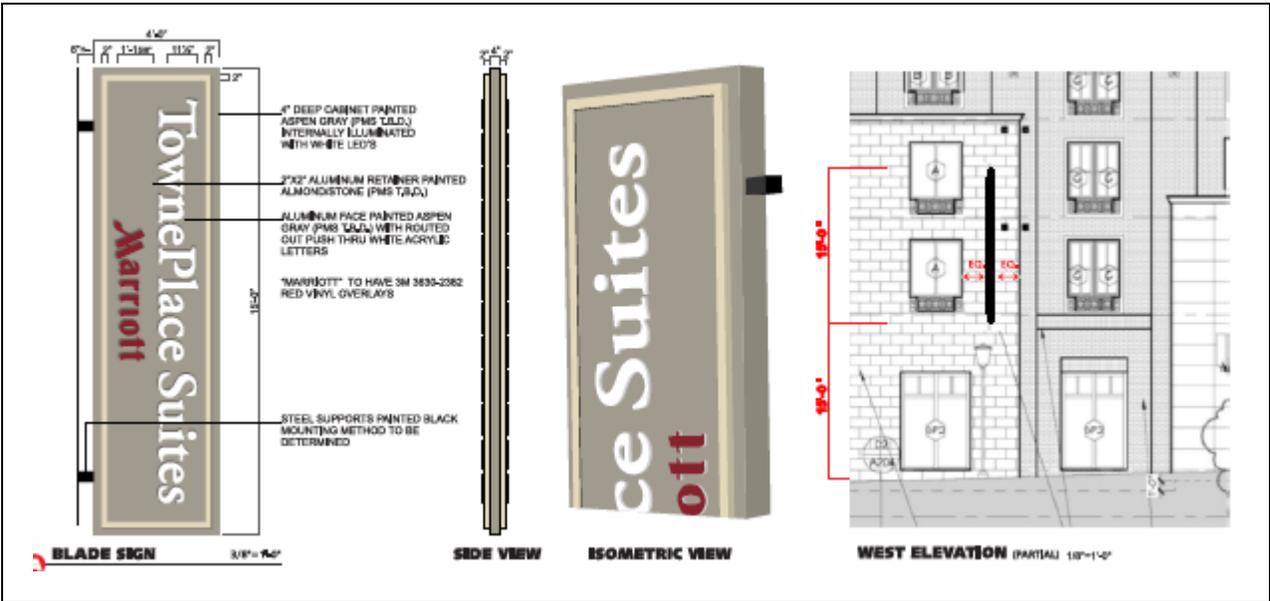
LAWRENCE HISTORIC RESOURCES COMMISSION
ITEM NO. 6: DR-14-00506
STAFF REPORT

A. SUMMARY

DR-14-00506 900 New Hampshire Street; Sign; Certificate of Appropriateness Review and Downtown Design Guidelines Review. The property is located in the environs of the Social Service League Building (905 Rhode Island), the Hendry House (941 Rhode Island), and the Turnhalle (900 Rhode Island), Lawrence Register of Historic Places. Submitted by Odegard Sign & Light for 900 New Hampshire LLC, the property owner of record.

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant proposes to install a projecting sign on the west elevation of the new structure located at 900 New Hampshire Street. The sign will be 15' x 4' and will be 60sf. The bottom of the sign will be 15' from the sidewalk and will be to the north of the main entrance to the hotel on the west elevation.



C. STANDARDS FOR REVIEW

Chapter 22 of the Code of the City of Lawrence (Certificate of Appropriateness)

(A) An application for a certificate of appropriateness shall be evaluated on a sliding scale, depending upon the designation of the building, structure, site or object in question. The certificate shall be evaluated on the following criteria:

1. *Most careful scrutiny and consideration shall be given to applications for designated landmarks;*

2. Slightly less scrutiny shall be applied to properties designated as key contributory within an historic district;

3. Properties designated contributory or non-contributory within an historic district shall receive a decreasing scale of evaluation upon application;

4. The least stringent evaluation is applied to noncontributory properties and the environs area of a landmark or historic district. There shall be a presumption that a certificate of appropriateness shall be approved in this category unless the proposed construction or demolition would significantly encroach on, damage, or destroy the landmark or historic district. If the Commission denies a certificate of appropriateness in this category, and the owner(s) appeals to the City Commission, the burden to affirm the denial shall be upon the commission, the City or other interested persons.

(B) In considering an application for a certificate of appropriateness, the Commission shall be guided by the following general standards in addition to any design criteria in this Chapter and in the ordinance designating the landmark or historic district:

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property that requires minimal alteration of the building, structure, site or object and its environment, or to use a property for its originally intended purpose;

2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural feature should be avoided when possible;

3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged;

4. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected;

5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a building, structure or site shall be treated with sensitivity;

6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, whenever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new materials should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of features, substantiated by historic, physical, or pictorial evidence, rather than on conceptual designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures;

7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building material shall not be undertaken;

8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, and project;

9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alteration and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material, and character of the property, neighborhood, or environs.

The Hendry House at 941 Rhode Island Street was added as a Landmark to the Lawrence Register of Historic Places prior to the adoption of environs definitions by the Historic Resources Commission.

Environs for the Social Service League Building

Area 1: Maintaining the existing structures and visual appearance of the environs is the primary focus of review. Main structure demolitions would be approved only if documentation was provided that indicated that the structure was unsound and/or a certificate of economic hardship was approved.

Minor projects (minor additions, porch remodeling, window and door changes, demolition of outbuildings, etc.) that do not involve the front facing facade will be approved administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. All design elements are important. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

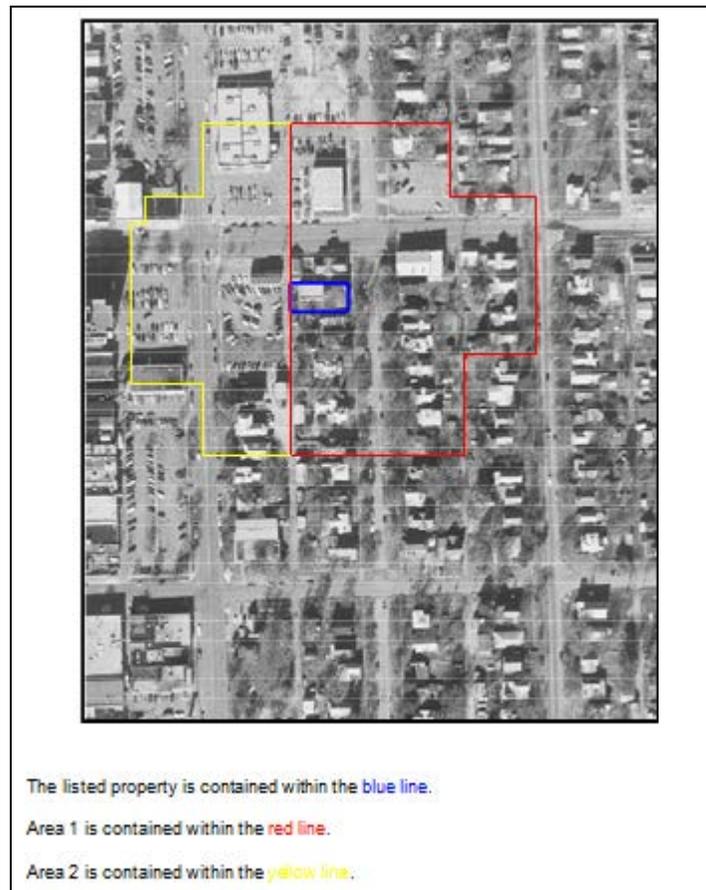
Major projects (major additions, new infill construction, major alterations, roof changes, dormers, etc., to the front facing elevations) would be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. All design elements are important. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Area 2: Because the area no longer reflects the residential character of the historic environs the area should reflect the development patterns established for the commercial areas of downtown.

The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205. Design elements that are important are scale, massing, site placement, height, directional expression, percentage of building coverage to site, setback, roof shapes, rhythm of openings and sense of entry. Demolition of properties shall be approved if a compatible structure is proposed on the site. Maintaining views to the listed property and maintaining the rhythm and pattern in the environs are the primary focus of review.

Minor projects will be approved administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Major projects (demolition of main structures, new infill construction, significant additions, etc.) will be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.



Environs for the Turnhalle

The Environs for the 900 Rhode Island Street, the Turnhalle, should be reviewed in the following manner. The Environs should be divided into three areas (see attached map) and the following standards applied to each of the areas:

Area 1: Maintaining the existing structures and visual appearance of the environs is the primary focus of review. Main structure demolitions would be approved only if documentation was provided that indicated that the structure was unsound and/or a certificate of economic hardship was approved.

Minor projects (minor additions, porch remodeling, window and door changes, demolition of outbuildings, etc.) will be approved administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. All design elements are important. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Major projects (major additions, new infill construction, major alterations, roof changes, dormers, etc.) would be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. All design elements are important. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation, the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs, and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Area 2: Because the area no longer reflects the residential character of the historic environs the area should reflect the development patterns established for the commercial areas of downtown. However, the area should create a transition area between the commercial area and the residential area.

The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205. Design elements that are important are scale, massing, site placement, height, directional expression, percentage of building coverage to site, setback, roof shapes, rhythm of openings and sense of entry. Demolition of properties shall be approved if a compatible structure is proposed on the site. Maintaining views to the listed property and maintaining the rhythm and pattern in the environs are the primary focus of review.

Minor projects will be approved administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Major projects (demolition of main structures, new infill construction, significant additions, etc.) will be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Area 3: Because the area no longer reflects the residential character of the historic environs

the area should reflect the development patterns established for commercial areas along 9th Street. However, the area should create a transition area between the commercial area and the residential area.

The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205. Design elements that are important are scale, massing, site placement, height, directional expression, percentage of building coverage to site, setback, roof shapes, rhythm of openings and sense of entry. Demolition of properties shall be approved if a compatible structure is proposed on the site. Maintaining views to the listed property and maintaining the rhythm and pattern in the environs are the primary focus of review.

Minor projects will be approved administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.

Major projects (demolition of main structures, new infill construction, significant additions, etc.) will be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Standards and Guidelines for Evaluating the Effect on Project on Environs and the Criteria set forth in 22-205.



Downtown Design Guidelines

The City Commission and the Historic Resources Commission have adopted a set of *Downtown Design Guidelines* (2009) to review projects within the Downtown Urban Conservation Overlay District. The guidelines that relate to this project are:

PART TWO – PRINCIPLES, STANDARDS, AND CRITERIA

4. General Urban Design Principles

- 4.1 Promote pedestrian-oriented urban forms.
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18. Signs and Signage

- 18.1 All signs shall conform to the Sign Code provisions in Chapter 5 Article 18 of the Code of the City of Lawrence.
- 18.2 The primary focus of signs in Downtown Lawrence shall be pedestrian-oriented in size, scale, and placement, and shall not be designed primarily to attract the notice of vehicular traffic.
- 18.3 'Permanent' sign types that are allowed are: awning, hanging, projecting, wall, and window signs. Freestanding signs will not be considered except in cases where a detached building is set back from the street.
- 18.4 Temporary (i.e., sidewalk, easel-mounted or freestanding) signage is permitted as long as it is in compliance with other City codes, and does not obscure significant streetscape vistas or architectural features.
- 18.5 In no case shall a temporary sign substitute as a permanent sign.
- 18.6 Wall signs must be flush-mounted on flat surfaces and done in such a way that does not destroy or conceal architectural features or details.
- 18.7 Signs identifying the name of a building, the date of construction, or other historical information should be composed of materials similar to the building, or of bronze or brass. These building identification signs should be affixed flat against the building and should not obscure architectural details; they may be incorporated into the overall facade design or mounted below a storefront cornice.
- 18.8 Signs should be subordinate to the building's facade. The size and scale of the sign shall be in proportion to the size and scale of the street level facade
- 18.9 Storefront signs should not extend past the storefront upper cornice line. Storefront signs are typically located in the transom area and shall not extend into the storefront opening.
- 18.10 Signs for multiple storefronts within the same building should align with each other.
- 18.11 Existing signs of particular historic or architectural merit, such as the Varsity or Granada theater marquees, should be preserved. Signs of such merit shall be determined at the discretion of the Historic Resources Commission.
- 18.12 Wall-mounted signs on friezes, lintels, spandrels, and fascias over storefront windows must be of an appropriate size and fit within these surfaces. A rule of thumb is to allow twenty (20) square inches of sign area for every one foot of linear façade width.
- 18.13 A hanging sign installed under an awning or canopy should be a maximum of 50% of the awning or canopy's width and should be perpendicular to the building's façade.
- 18.14 A projecting sign shall provide a minimum clearance of eight feet between the sidewalk surface and the bottom of the sign.
- 18.15 A projecting sign shall be no more than fifteen square feet in size with a maximum sign height of five feet.
- 18.16 A larger projecting sign should be mounted higher, and centered on the facade or positioned at the corner of a building.
- 18.17 A projecting sign shall in no case project beyond 1/2 of the sidewalk width.
- 18.18 A window sign should cover no more than approximately thirty percent (30%) of the total

- window area.
- 18.19 Sign brackets and hardware should be compatible with the building and installed in a workman-like manner.
 - 18.20 The light for a sign should be an indirect source, such as shielded, external lamps. Consideration may be given to internal or halo illumination.
 - 18.21 Whether they are wall-mounted, suspended, affixed to awnings, or projecting, signs must be placed in locations that do not obscure any historic architectural features of the building or obstruct any views or vistas of historic downtown.
 - 18.22 Signs illuminated from within are generally not appropriate. Lighting for externally illuminated signs must be simple and unobtrusive and must not obscure the content of the sign or the building facade.

D. STAFF ANALYSIS

Certificate of Appropriateness

The property is not listed in the Lawrence Register but is located in the environs of properties listed in the Lawrence Register. In reviewing projects for a Certificate of Appropriateness, the *least stringent evaluation is applied to noncontributory properties and the environs area of a landmark or historic district. There shall be a presumption that a certificate of appropriateness shall be approved in this category unless the proposed construction or demolition would significantly encroach on, damage, or destroy the landmark or historic district.*

The environs of historic properties include individual buildings, structures, and objects that contribute to the significance of the environs. As 900 New Hampshire Street is a new structure, it does not contribute to the historic properties' sense of time, place and historical development. Signs, like expansion and exterior alteration of properties in the environs, can affect the overall character of the environs. Signs should be evaluated on a case by case basis and changes to the environs should be evaluated for the magnitude of impact by considering size, scale, design, and location.

The project parcel is within the 250' environs of properties listed in the Lawrence Register and due to the size of the structure now located on the parcel, there is a line of sight from the listed properties to the new building. However, the proposed sign will be located on the west side of the building. The proposed sign location has no line of sight to the listed properties.

While there is no direct line of sight to the listed properties from the proposed sign location, environs review also considers the design of new additions to determine compatibility with the size, scale, color, material, and character of environs. The environs summaries for both the Social Service League Building and the Turnhalle recognize that this area of the environs no longer has the residential character that was associated with the properties during their period of significance. This area is identified in both summaries as an area that should reflect the development patterns established for the commercial areas of downtown.

The development pattern for signs in the downtown area has changed significantly over time. The current patterns are guided by the Downtown Design Guidelines. The proposed sign is similar to large projecting signs located on building corners along New Hampshire Street, specifically the bank sign on Hobbs Taylor Lofts and the Summit sign on 901 New Hampshire. These two signs help to

create the pattern of large signs on the corner of structures. There are no large projecting signs in the environs or in the area adjacent to the environs that are placed mid-block. While the size, scale and massing of the sign are compatible with the building to which it will be attached, these elements are not typical for the majority of signs in the Downtown area. The size of the sign placed in the proposed location is not compatible with the existing character of the environs. Staff has found no indication that large mid-block signs existed historically in the location.

The Certificate of Appropriateness review for projects in the environs is the least stringent review under Chapter 22. Significant impact to the environs should be determined if the Certificate is to be denied. While staff is of the opinion the sign is not compatible in placement on the mid-portion of the building, the overall sign appears to be within the range of signs in the commercial areas identified in the environs definitions. The fact that there is no direct line of sight from the proposed sign to the listed properties is an important factor in the determination as to if the installation of the sign will "significantly" encroach on, damage, or destroy the landmark. Staff is of the opinion that the proposed project does not meet the level of significance required to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness. Staff does, however, encourage the applicant to investigate alternative signage solutions for the property.

Downtown Design Guidelines

The Downtown Design Guidelines were adopted to regulate exterior scale, massing, design, arrangement, texture, and materials within the downtown area in order to promote compatibility with the downtown's existing architectural character. The guidelines are not meant to dictate design choices or serve as a checklist for "good" design. They are not meant to force new development into narrowly-defined molds that would recreate only turn of the century architectural forms. Nor are they intended to be applied in such a stringent manner as to prevent creative or contemporary design alternatives. However, the guidelines are designed to foster and maintain Lawrence's economic viability by preserving the existing character and fabric of the downtown area while encouraging development and improvements that complement its historic character. Individual guidelines are often stated in absolute terms such as "Buildings ... shall be constructed to zero front and side lot lines." Just as compatible design consists of individual building elements in a larger building envelope, these design guidelines are viewed as a collective document and not as independent statements. The Historic Resources Commission has the authority and discretion to examine the whole situation, or extenuating circumstances, and approve projects that do not meet the letter of the guidelines. It is understood that a project might not meet every guideline in order to conform to the document's intent. The guidelines state that designs and changes approved or rejected elsewhere in the Conservation Overlay District do not necessarily act as a precedent for other designs or changes under consideration. All proposals will be considered individually based on their own merit and unique situation within the overlay district.

The applicant is proposing to install a blade sign that projects approximately 4 ½ feet from the west elevation of the new structure located at 900 New Hampshire Street. The bottom of the sign will be 15' from the sidewalk and the height of the sign will be 15'. The total square footage for the sign is 60sf. The sign will be internally illuminated. The sign will be placed to the north of the primary entrance for the hotel on the west elevation of the structure.

The proposed sign meets some of the guidelines but not all of the guidelines.

One of the primary themes of the Downtown Design Guidelines and one of the primary

characteristics of Downtown Lawrence is pedestrian orientation. Guideline 18.2 specifically states that the primary focus of signs in Downtown Lawrence shall be pedestrian-oriented in size, scale, and placement, and shall not be designed primarily to attract the notice of vehicular traffic. As proposed, staff is of the opinion that the sign size and placement are not pedestrian oriented and are intended to attract the notice of vehicular traffic. Other guidelines that the proposed project does not meet include:

18.15 A projecting sign shall be no more than fifteen square feet in size with a maximum sign height of five feet.

The total sign size is 60sf and the height of the sign is 15'.

18.16 A larger projecting sign should be mounted higher, and centered on the facade or positioned at the corner of a building.

The proposed sign is not centered on the façade or positioned at the corner of the building.

18.8 Signs should be subordinate to the building's facade. The size and scale of the sign shall be in proportion to the size and scale of the street level façade.

While the sign is subordinate to the large building façade, it is not in proportion to the size and scale of the street level façade.

Guidelines that the proposed project meets include:

18.8 Signs should be subordinate to the building's facade.

18.14 A projecting sign shall provide a minimum clearance of eight feet between the sidewalk surface and the bottom of the sign.

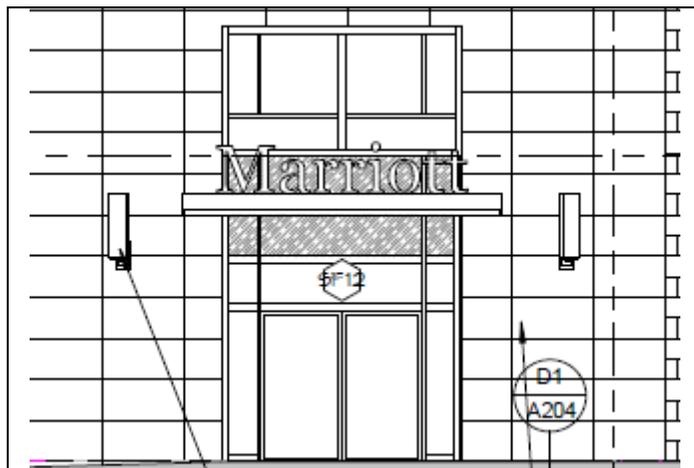
18.17 A projecting sign shall in no case project beyond 1/2 of the sidewalk width.

18.20 The light for a sign should be an indirect source, such as shielded, external lamps. Consideration may be given to internal or halo illumination.

18.21 Whether they are wall-mounted, suspended, affixed to awnings, or projecting, signs must be placed in locations that do not obscure any historic architectural features of the building or obstruct any views or vistas of historic downtown.

It is the practice of staff and the HRC to work with applicants to identify solutions that will meet the intent of the guidelines while achieving the primary project goals of the applicant. This project is difficult as the applicant has indicated that the proposed location is due to the inability to locate the sign on either corner of the building.

In addition to the proposed project, signage on this structure could be placed on the proposed awning over the primary entrance on the west elevation. This was shown on the architectural drawings that were approved by the Commission. This signage could be illuminated for visibility, but it would be more pedestrian oriented and would not be restricted by the guidelines for projecting signs.



Another option would be for the proposed sign to be reduced in size and placed closer to the entrance and lower on the building. This option would allow for visibility and would be more pedestrian oriented. The reduced size and placement would also help the sign to be in proportion to the size and scale of the street level façade including the large entrance section of the structure.

The applicant might also investigate installation methods that would allow the sign to be installed on the northwest corner of the structure at the corner of 9th and New Hampshire. This is the primary location for a projecting sign and offers pedestrian views from both 9th Street and New Hampshire Street.

Finally, with direction from the Commission, the applicant could work with the Architectural Review Committee to identify a sign type that will meet the goals of the applicant and the intent of the Design Guidelines.

Staff is of the opinion that the proposed sign does not meet the significant intent of the guidelines to promote pedestrian oriented development in the overlay district. However, the building design, use, and location of the entrance for the use associated with the sign are unique circumstances that should be considered.

E. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

In accordance with the Chapter 22 of the Code of the City of Lawrence, the standards of evaluation, staff recommends the Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness and make the determination that the proposed project does not encroach upon, damage, or destroy one or more listed historic properties.

For the *Downtown Design Guidelines* review, staff recommends the Commission evaluate the proposed options and determine if one or more options meet the intent of the *Downtown Design Guidelines*. If the Commission determines that the project can meet the intent of the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, the Commission should approve the proposed project and find that the proposed project meets the intent of the *Downtown Design Guidelines*, the standards of evaluation.