



The City of Seattle

## Pioneer Square Preservation Board

Mailing Address: PO Box 94649, Seattle WA 98124-4649

Street Address: 600 4th Avenue, 4th Floor

PSB 159/23

### Staff REPORT

for Board meeting June 21, 2023

Board Members Please Note: The citations from the District Ordinance, Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District, and Secretary of the Interior's Standards listed below are for your consideration in addition to any other citations you find relevant in considering each application.

**0621231**      **Furuya Corgiat Buildings/Pacific Commercial**

240 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave S

Flatstick Pub

Applicant: Henry Walters, architect

Signage including a LED rope simulating neon sign, window signage, and a wall sign  
Sidewalk café with railing

ARC report: ARC reviewed the proposal on May 10, 2023.

The ARC asked for the following information:

Existing condition building photo that is easier to see, either larger or not greyed out.

Section drawing of the illuminated sign should show the lighting using LED tubes. The section drawing showing the lighting is also important to demonstrate that the sign is not an internally lit sign.

Revise the section drawing to show the windows and mullion instead of a flat surface and more clearly how the sign is attached.

Consider options that move the sign to the left or reduce size of the sign so that it is more responsive to the architecture of the building and in scale with the storefront. The ARC expressed concern that sign also covered most of the transom windows.

Explain how the wall sign will be painted so it appears softer and weathered.

ARC requested more information about if the existing wall sign had historical significance or not and when and how it was approved. ARC expressed that this is a highly unusual type of sign in the district and should be more thoroughly considered.

The applicant indicated that they would return with a couple of options for consideration.

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program  
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

"Printed on Recycled Paper"

Staff report: This project is not eligible for administrative review because the signage portion of the application includes a request for an exception to letter height that requires Board review. Board review is also required of a painted wall sign on top of a painted existing wall sign.

I was able to locate the original Certificate of Approval for the wall sign. It was approved in 1987 prior to the rules that might have prevented approval of it. Those rules that prohibit upper level signs and not painting unpainted brick appear to have been added in 1993 and 1999.

The Board approved a building renovation in 2008. The minutes reflect no discussion of the sign on the wall, the need for it to be removed or if the tenant would be returning after the renovation. I recommend that if the Board were to approve a new sign here that the approval stipulate that the sign has to be removed entirely if the tenant is no longer in the building so that it is clear an off premise sign should not remain.

Being this is a new sign, though painted on top of an existing sign, The Board should consider the existing rules for signage and painting and any exception needed to be clearly communicated as to the reason for the approval. The Board should have discussion of the following:

Is the existing sign a ghost sign?

Is the existing sign an off -premise sign?

On a building of this size what would be an upper level sign? Is the Board considering how far from the ground or how far from the top or both. The proposed guidelines say a wall sign should be on the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

Because the sign is existing does that affect your consideration.

The guidelines state that "Letter size in windows, awnings and hanging signs shall be consistent with the scale of the architectural elements of the building (as per SMC 23.66.160) but shall not exceed a maximum height of 10 inches unless an exception has been approved as set forth." The Board had used this exception for when letters in the business logo are also a graphic or some other kind of embellishment, but the sign otherwise is in scale with the building. For example, a "t" that also looks like a graphic fork. I can't think of an example where a graphic that looked like a letter and was used to spell the business name was not considered a letter.

The Board has previously denied a large, illuminated sign located on the top floor of a building that was 18 stories tall as upper floor signage is prohibited in the district. The Board recently did not support an illuminated sign on a penthouse addition because upper floor signage is prohibited.

The application provides photos from the district (left to right, up then down) Photos 1, 4, 5, and 9 are historic ghost signs. Not only do those signs not comply with the District rules and Seattle Municipal Code, the Board has considered ghost signs as remnants of "historical advertisements painted on the exterior of a building wall heralding an obsolete product, an outdated trademark, the name of a business previously located on a site, or the service or product offered by a prior building occupant," and have not considered them as signage, but as architectural features of historic buildings and not a precedent for new signs. Photo 2, the Café Hue wall sign is located on the second floor of the building and is painted on wood and

applied to the building. I believe it is the only sign in these photos that was reviewed for a Certificate of Approval and complied with the current regulations. Photo 3 I do not know the full history of the "Howl at the Moon", but there is not currently a business there with that name. Barney's Loans sign which is on a one story building has been there approximately 80 years and the business is still in operation. The 7<sup>th</sup> photo of "the Lofts " is a building name sign that replaced another building name sign. Seattle Lighting is both the name of the building and the name of the business, it is another non-conforming sign that is larger than what would be allowed today.

Draft Motion1: I move to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for:  
Sidewalk café with railing;

Installation of signage, - LED rope simulating neon sign, window signage, and a wall sign painted over the existing painted wall sign, the reasons for the approval of the painted wall sign over an existing wall sign are....

All as presented

Draft Motion2: I move to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for:  
Sidewalk café with railing;

Installation of signage, - LED rope simulating neon sign, and window signage;

The painting of a wall sign over the existing painted sign is not approved for the following reasons (*the Board should adjust these potential reasons based on the discussion at the meeting*)

The Board finds the sign to be an upper level sign that is prohibited,

The sign is painted directly on the wall adding a second layer of paint on a previously unpainted wall which the district rules and the secretary of Interior standards indicate should not be painted,

The existing sign was originally approved before the district rules prohibited upper level sign and specified that the unpainted masonry should not be painted and therefore do not set a precedent.

The examples of wall sign provided do not set a precedent because ghost sign are not approved signs but are remnant architectural features of the historic buildings that should be distinguished from modern signage, other wall signs shown were also not reviewed under the current guidelines

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the *June 21, 2023* public meeting and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

Code Citations:

SMC

23.66.030 Certificates of Approval required

A. Certificate of approval required. No person shall alter, demolish, construct, reconstruct, restore, remodel, make any visible change to the exterior appearance of any structure, or to the public rights-of-way or other public spaces in a special review district, and no one shall remove or substantially alter any existing sign or erect or place any new sign or change the principal use of any building, or any portion of a building, structure or lot in a special review district, and no permit for such activity shall be issued unless a certificate of approval has been issued by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

### 23.66.160 Signs

- B. To ensure that flags, banners and signs are of a scale, color, shape and type compatible with the Pioneer Square Preservation District objectives stated in Section 23.66.100 and with the character of the District and the buildings in the District, to reduce driver distraction and visual blight, to ensure that the messages of signs are not lost through undue proliferation, and to enhance views and sight lines into and down streets, the overall design of a sign, flag, or banner, including size, shape, typeface, texture, method of attachment, color, graphics and lighting, and the number and location of signs, flags, and banners, shall be reviewed by the Board and are regulated as set out in this Section 23.66.160. Building owners are encouraged to develop an overall signage plan for their buildings.
- C. In determining the appropriateness of signs, including flags and banners used as signs as defined in Section 23.84A.036, the Preservation Board shall consider the following:
  - 1. Signs Attached or Applied to Structures.
    - a. The relationship of the shape of the proposed sign to the architecture of the building and with the shape of other approved signs located on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - b. The relationship of the texture of the proposed sign to the building for which it is proposed, and with other approved signs located on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - c. The possibility of physical damage to the structure and the degree to which the method of attachment would conceal or disfigure desirable architectural features or details of the structure (the method of attachment shall be approved by the Director);
    - d. The relationship of the proposed colors and graphics with the colors of the building and with other approved signs on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - e. The relationship of the proposed sign with existing lights and lighting standards, and with the architectural and design motifs of the building;
    - f. Whether the proposed sign lighting will detract from the character of the building; and
    - g. The compatibility of the colors and graphics of the proposed sign with the character of the District.
  - 2. Wall signs painted on or affixed to a building shall not exceed ten percent of the total area of the façade or 240 square feet, whichever is less. Area of original building finish visible within the exterior dimensions of the sign (e.g., unpainted brick) shall not be considered when computing the sign's area.
  - 4. When determining the appropriate size of a sign the Board and the Director of Neighborhoods shall also consider the function of the sign and the

character and scale of buildings in the immediate vicinity, the character and scale of the building for which the sign is proposed, the proposed location of the sign on the building's exterior, and the total number and size of signs proposed or existing on the building.

### **Pioneer Square Preservation District Rules**

#### III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REHABILITATION AND NEW CONSTRUCTION

- A. Color. Building facades are primarily composed of varied tones of red brick masonry or gray sandstone. Unfinished brick, stone, or concrete masonry unit surfaces may not be painted. Painted color is typically applied to wooden window sash, sheet metal ornament and wooden or cast iron storefronts. Paint colors shall be appropriate to ensure compatibility within the District. (7/99)

#### XX. RULES FOR TRANSPARENCY, SIGNS, AWNINGS AND CANOPIES

##### B. General Signage Regulations

All signs on or hanging from buildings, in windows, or applied to windows, are subject to review and approval by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board. (8/93) Locations for signs shall be in accordance with all other regulations for signage. (12/94)

The intent of sign regulations is to ensure that signs relate physically and visually to their location; that signs not hide, damage or obscure the architectural elements of the building; that signs be oriented toward and promote a pedestrian environment; and that the products or services offered be the focus, rather than signs. (8/93)

Sign Materials: Wood or wood products are the preferred materials for rigid hanging and projecting (blade) signs and individual signage letters applied to building facades. (7/99)

##### C. Specific Signage Regulations

1. Letter Size. Letter size in windows, awnings and hanging signs shall be consistent with the scale of the architectural elements of the building (as per SMC 23.66.160), but shall not exceed a maximum height of 10 inches unless an exception has been approved as set forth in this paragraph. Exceptions to the 10-inch height limitation will be considered for individual letters in the business name (subject to a limit of no more than three letters) only if both of the following conditions are satisfied: a) the

exception is sought as part of a reduced overall sign package or plan for the business; and b) the size of the letters for which an exception is requested is consistent with the scale and character of the building, the frontage of the business, the transparency requirements of the regulations, and all other conditions under SMC 23.66.160. An overall sign package or plan will be considered reduced for purposes of the exception if it calls for approval of signage that is substantially less than what would otherwise be allowable under the regulations. (12/94)

6. Upper Floor Signage. Upper floor signage is not permitted, except for temporary signage as per SMC 23.66.160D or when it is proposed as part of an overall integrated sign plan for the building.
7. Internally Lit Signs. Internally lit or backlit signs are prohibited. (8/93)
8. Wall Signs. The Board recommends that wall signs be painted on a wood or metal backing and attached in such a manner that the building surface is not damaged. Colors and graphics of wall signs shall be compatible with the character of the District, and letter sizes shall be appropriately scaled to fit the overall design and dimensions of the sign. (7/99, 7/03)

#### Secretary of Interior's Standards

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be taken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Issued: May 12, 2023

Genna Nashem  
Pioneer Square Preservation Board Coordinator