
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	1740 14th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	14th Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	June 30, 2022	X Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	22-326	New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition

The Aslin Brewing Company seeks permit review for installation of a sign on the site of a non-contributing building at the corner of 14th and S streets in the 14th Street Historic District.

Property Description

1740 14th Street is a one-story, two-bay brick garage built as a gas station in 1969. While one of the historical and architectural contexts established in the nomination for the 14th Street Historic District is how the street became a center for automobile showrooms, garages and service buildings in the early to mid-20th century, the building is not contributing to the district as it falls well outside the period of significance (1855-1940).

The Board recently approved plans for conversion of the building to a beer garden which included construction of a wood-slat fence enclosing the property and a gull-wing metal canopy structure evocative of a mid-20th century gas station.

Proposal

The project calls for installation of an illuminated sign mounted on a pole atop the new metal canopy. The sign would consist of two cabinets – a lower fixed cabinet reading “aslin beer co” and an upper sign containing a round rotating logo within a fixed rectangular cabinet. Together, the two cabinets would measure 9’ wide by 6’4” wide.

Evaluation

Signs are reviewed under the Board’s regulations “Standards for Signs, Awnings, Canopies and Marquees” (DCMR 10-C, Chapter 25). The regulations are intended to establish compatibility standards for the placement, size and type of signs on historic property and encourage distinctive high-quality signs that enhance the quality of historic districts; the regulations also express a recognition that different standards may apply to different property types and historic contexts.

The standards include the following section that discourages the type of signage proposed:

2503.7 Sign types developed for suburban highway-oriented environments are not compatible with urban historic districts. Billboards, rooftop signs, pole-mounted gas station signs, and other over scaled advertising designed to be viewed at high speed or from a great distance are generally not appropriate on historic properties or in historic streetscapes.

However, HPO believes that the context of this location and the specific character of this building warrants an exception to that standard. While non-contributing to the historic district, the applicants have renovated it in a manner intended to evoke a mid-century modern aesthetic, to which the proposed sign relates. The sign will be placed atop the new gull-wing canopy structure but at a height that is equivalent to the second story of adjacent buildings, rather than towering above historic buildings on the street, and is pulled back from both the 14th and S Street property lines to the center of the property. Finally, the sign will not be out of context within the particular character of 14th Street, with its history of automobile related buildings, its vibrant and eclectic commercial context, and its designation as an arts district in which unusual signs are part of the street's character.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends that the Review Board approve the proposed sign as compatible with the context of the 14th Street Historic District.