Z&P Meeting: April 8, 2024
City Council Meeting: May 6, 2024

JOPLIN
PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, & NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES

STAFF PLANNING REPORT
Zoning Text Amendment

CASE 017-24 A request from the City of Joplin Historic Preservation Commission to review a proposed amendment to the adopted Design Review Standards of the Sunshine Lamp District, a locally designated Historic district in Downtown Joplin.

APPLICANT Joplin Historic Preservation Commission

STAFF ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

The Design Review Standards have had a meaningful impact to the rehabilitation of Downtown since the adoption in 2005, specifically in those properties within the designated Sunshine Lamp District.

The Design Review Standards of the Sunshine Lamp District provide a planned approach to the vitality of Downtown through the use of proper rehabilitation and maintenance techniques in preserving the community's cultural and architectural resources. In doing so, the standards facilitate the benefits to the community in economic and environmental benefit, while simultaneously ensuring the character of the Downtown built environment will be preserved.

Amending and updating the Design Review Standards is necessary in upholding the intent of Preservation. Preservation neither requires a property to be visually frozen in time, nor restored to original, as built. The story that is the life of a building or a historic district has many chapters, and to ensure that the story of our community is told to future generations a property or district must be updated and modernized to remain relevant, and marketable, or else fall into disuse. Rehabilitation and the updating of standards, while still protecting the character and appropriateness of historic resources, ensures the longevity of a building, district or landmark.

Historically, neon signs have been a part of downtown. Scale and orientation of neon signs changed drastically over the period of popularity for the signage. Initially neon signs were of similar scale and placement of the pedestrian oriented signs they replaced. As signage became more auto oriented, scale grew, placement moved higher on buildings with the zenith of the neon sign resulting in massive installations of downtown roofs, intended to be seen from the driver of an automobile, not blocks away, but sometimes miles.

In response from interest and desire from Downtown Joplin, the Historic Preservation Commission has written the attached amendment to the Design Review Standards for the Sunshine Lamp District. The amended sign standards, beginning on page 20, are intended to uphold the best of the current general standards for the district in order to not radically change the environment, and allowing neon signage with reasonable limits to prevent unintended detrimental affect to downtown.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Sign Standards – General Standards Statement

The general standards to be upheld in the interpretation of the following enumerated standards is unchanged. Specifically, signs oriented towards the automobile in size or location shall not be permitted. Downtown is a valuable pedestrian environment in the community, and the standards will continue to maintain the pedestrian focus of the standards.

Sign Standards – General Standards #4

Neon has been removed as a prohibited material for signs.

Sign Standards – General Standards #5, m.

Language has been changed to exclude neon signs from the prohibited illuminated signs descriptions in downtown, conditioned on meeting the requirements of the new neon sign standards.

Sign Standards – Neon Signs

The new neon sign standards maintain the pedestrian focus by limiting neon signs to projecting signs. In the downtown, the result of this restriction is the area of highest visibility is from the vantage point of a downtown sidewalk. Further, projecting signs are limited to Main Street Facades. The intent of this is simply stated. Even a pedestrian oriented sign, illuminated, is visible for blocks along the street it is oriented. Neon signs would be visible from the neighborhoods adjacent to downtown should they be permitted on streets perpendicular to Main Street. All following standards in the remainder of the newly drafted section have the purpose of limiting the cumulative impact of added light of not just one, but the totality of potential neon signs in downtown. While not every property owner will order a neon sign, over the course of several years following the adoption of these amended standards, these standards will ensure the resulting glow in downtown from any one sign will have limited impact on the neighboring property and the cumulative glow of all potential neon signs will not have detrimental effect on the residents of Downtown. Downtown is unique in the City, for it is a center for events and businesses, but is also a neighborhood.

Staff recommends approval of Case 017-24, and resolution for adoption be forwarded to the Joplin City Council.