

STAFF DESIGN COMMISSION REPORT

PROJECT INFORMATION:

Project Name: Metropolis Performing Arts Center,
Sign Variation
Project Address: 111 W. Campbell Street
Prepared By: Steve Hautzinger
Date Prepared: November 6, 2019

PETITION INFORMATION:

DC Number: 19-095
Petitioner Name: Stephen Daday
Petitioner Address: 111 W. Campbell Street
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
Meeting Date: November 12, 2019

Requested Action(s):

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-801.c.2 to allow a theater marquee with electronic message displays, where only manual change displays are allowed.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-120.f to allow off-premises advertising on the theater marquee electronic message displays for theater sponsor names, where off-premises advertising is prohibited.

ANALYSIS:

Summary:

The subject design is being forwarded to the Design Commission for review pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Municipal Code, specifically Section 6-501 (e)(1), which states that the Design Commission "shall review all Plan Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Permit and Sign Permit applications for new construction and those improvements which affect the architectural design of the building, site improvements or signage to determine whether it meets with the standards, requirements and purposes of the Design Guidelines and Chapter 30, Sign Regulations."

The Metropolis Performing Arts Centre is proposing to remove the existing curved glass entrance canopy on the front of the Metropolis building and replace it with a new theater marquee canopy. The new marquee is designed in the style of a traditional theater marquee, and it will include the following features:

- Illuminated "METROPOLIS PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE" signage and theater logo on the front face.
- Changeable electronic message displays on each side, with small illuminated "METROPOLIS" signage below.
- Individual illuminated LED accent light bulbs on all three sides (the bulbs will have a warm color tone, less than 4,000 Kelvin).
- Decorative soffit lighting.

The petitioner is proposing to remove the two existing middle fabric banners to accommodate the new marquee hanging rods. The two remaining banners will be used by the Metropolis School of the Performing Arts.

Per Chapter 30 Sign Code, marquees are allowed in the Downtown, if in conjunction with a theater. However, only manual change displays are allowed, so a sign variation is required to allow the proposed electronic message displays. In 2017, the Village-wide matter of electronic signage was studied, and as part of that study, one option that was considered was to allow electronic signage for major tourism venues, such as the Metropolis Theater. However, the Design Commission and Village Board decided that it would be better to review such requests on a case-by-case basis as sign variations.

The theater is proposing to use the electronic displays to promote upcoming and current theater productions. As part of those advertisements, the theater is proposing to include the names of sponsors (as shown in the examples provided). Off-premises sponsor advertising is not allowed, so an additional variation is required to allow it.

Staff recommends the following conditions and restrictions:

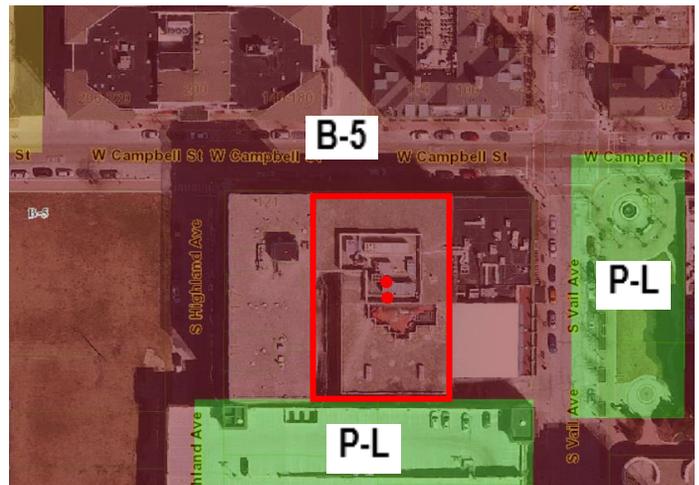
1. The electronic displays shall only be used to advertise upcoming and current theater productions and events, except for theater sponsor names which shall be limited to a maximum of 10% of the electronic display area for a given theater production advertisement, and shall be in substantial compliance with the examples received 10/25/19.
2. The marquee lights and electronic displays shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M that

the business is not in operation. The lighting on the underside of the marquee only may remain on for 1 hour after the last business in the building closes, no later than 3:00 A.M.

3. The brightness of the individual light bulbs shall be dimmable, and they shall not chase or blink.
4. The electronic displays shall be static displays only with no scrolling, fading, flashing, animation, video, or sound.
5. The message on the electronic displays shall be held for a minimum of 10 seconds.
6. The electronic displays shall be equipped with auto-dimming photocell technology to control the brightness to .3 footcandles maximum above ambient lighting conditions, to be certified by the manufacturer.



Aerial of Property



Zoning Map of Property

Surrounding Land Uses:

Direction	Existing Zoning	Existing Use
Subject Property	B-5, Downtown District	Mixed-Use: Metropolis Performing Arts Centre, Mago Restaurant, Metropolis School of the Performing Arts, Arlington Ale House
North	B-5, Downtown District	Mixed-Use: Peggy Kinnane's Restaurant, Multi-Family Condominiums
South	P-L, Public Land	Parking Garage
East	B-5, Downtown District	Mixed-Use: Armand's Pizzeria, Metropolis Ballroom
West	B-5, Downtown District	Mixed-Use: Runner's High, Multi-Family Condominiums

Table 1: Summary of Existing Signage at 111 W. Campbell Street:

SIGN	QUANTITY	SIZE	REMARKS
MAGO signs	2	9 sf each	Variation approved in 2017 to allow two wall signs.
Arlington Ale House signs	2	9 sf each	No permit history. Variation required to allow two wall signs.
METROPOLIS stone arch	1	20 sf	Variation approved in 1999.
METROPOLIS fabric banners	4	87 sf each	Variation approved in 1999. Note: The two middle banners will be removed to accommodate the new marquee hanging rods. The two remaining banners will be used for the Metropolis School of the Performing Arts.
Poster boxes	2	10 sf each	Variation approved in 1999.

Sign Variation Criteria:

The Village Sign Code, Chapter 30, Section 30-901 sets out the criteria for granting a sign variation.

- a. *That the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the Petitioner.*
- b. *That the granting of said variation will not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare;*
- c. *That the variation will serve to relieve the Petitioner from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship, and will not merely serve to provide the Petitioner with a competitive advantage over similar businesses;*
- d. *That the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality;*
- e. *That the Petitioner's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this chapter.*

The petitioner has submitted a letter addressing the hardship criteria, which in summary states that the existing signage for the theater is lacking and patrons have a difficult time locating the theater. Additionally, the small poster boxes are insufficient to promote theater productions. The new marquee is necessary to clearly identify the theater, and the proposed electronic message displays are needed to effectively promote current and upcoming productions. The petitioner reports that almost all performing arts centers in Chicagoland have marquees, and the proposed marquee will be a focal point in the Downtown entertainment and dining area.

Staff Comments:

Staff agrees that the existing theater signage is insufficient, and it is currently very difficult to know that there is a theater inside the building. Staff has worked closely with the petitioner on the design of the proposed marquee, and overall it has a classy appearance that is very appropriate for a theater and works well with the building. The use of electronic message displays on the marquee is also appropriate at this major entertainment venue to effectively promote current and upcoming theater productions. Finally, Staff does not object to the use of off-premises sponsor names on the marquee since this is a unique situation associated with current or upcoming theater productions only, and the sponsor named will be limited to only 10 percent of the display area for any given production advertisement.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Design Commission recommend **approval** to the Village Board for the following sign variations for the *Metropolis Performing Arts Centre* at 111 W. Campbell Street:

1. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-801.c.2 to allow a theater marquee with electronic message displays, where only manual change displays are allowed.
2. A variation from Chapter 30, Section 30-120.f to allow off-premises advertising on the theater marquee electronic message displays for theater sponsor names, where off-premises advertising is prohibited.

This recommendation is subject to compliance with the plans received 10/25/19, Federal, State, and Village Codes, regulations, and policies, and the issuance of all required permits, and the following conditions:

1. The electronic displays shall only be used to advertise upcoming and current theater productions and events, except for theater sponsor names which shall be limited to a maximum of 10% of the electronic display area for a given theater production advertisement, and shall be in substantial compliance with the examples received 10/25/19.
2. The marquee lights and electronic displays shall be turned off at all times between the hours of 11:00 P.M. and 7:00 A.M that the business is not in operation. The lighting on the underside of the marquee only may remain on for 1 hour after the last business in the building closes, no later than 3:00 A.M.
3. The brightness of the individual light bulbs shall be dimmable, and they shall not chase or blink.
4. The electronic displays shall be static displays only with no scrolling, fading, flashing, animation, video, or sound.
5. The message on the electronic displays shall be held for a minimum of 10 seconds.
6. The electronic displays shall be equipped with auto-dimming photocell technology to control the brightness to .3 footcandles maximum above ambient lighting conditions, to be certified by the manufacturer.
7. This review deals with architectural design only and should not be construed to be an approval of, or to have any other impact on, any other zoning and/or land use issues or decisions that stem from zoning, building, signage or any other reviews. In

addition to the normal technical review, permit drawings will be reviewed for consistency with the Design Commission and any other Commission or Board approval conditions. It is the architect/homeowner/builder's responsibility to comply with the Design Commission approval and ensure that building permit plans comply with all zoning code, building permit and signage requirements.

November 6, 2019

Steve Hautzinger AIA, Design Planner
Department of Planning & Community Development

c: Charles Witherington-Perkins, Director of Planning and Community Development, Petitioner, DC File 19-095