



# CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

# MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Planning Commission acting as Historic Landmarks Commission  
**FROM:** Jennifer Dimsho, Associate Planner  
**RE:** New Wall Signs for 291 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street (Lightning Treats & Sweets)  
**DATE:** August 6, 2024

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In July, staff noticed new signage installed at 291 S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street for Lightning Treats & Sweets. No business license or sign permits had been submitted for a business at this location. Staff contacted the business owner and discussed the process for business licensing and for permitting the signage. The business owner has been cooperative and submitted application materials for both the signage and the business license.

Being in the Riverfront District (RD) zone, signage is subject to review by the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) pursuant to SHMC 17.32.172(7). I have included excerpts from the [Architectural Design Guidelines](#) relevant to new signage. The HLC's recommendation will be incorporated into the sign permit decision which will be issued by staff after the meeting.

There are two components to the application: the signs located on the lower storefront paneled bulkhead and the signage located on the upper transom windows.

**Lower Storefront Bulkhead:** The definition of "sign" requires us to define each panel located on the bulkhead below the window as a separate sign requiring a permit and subject to dimensional/size limitations. Because of our maximum wall signage limitations, the applicant had the "bulkhead" signage redesigned to remove the text, which removes it from the definition of a "sign." The new bulkhead panel designs are included as the last page of the Applicant's materials.

SHMC 17.32.172 (7) requires that **all permanent exterior architectural features** be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines (except regular maintenance not requiring a building permit or painting of buildings, except previously unpainted masonry). The corrugated plastic panels that the applicant installed on the lower storefront bulkhead could be considered a permanent exterior architectural feature, although no building permits are required. They could also be considered temporary, given their easy removal. **Does the Commission feel these corrugated plastic panels are permanent exterior architectural features which are subject to review?** I am concerned about how these panels will look after being weathered in the rain and sun. Arguably, the applicant is using what should be a temporary material for long-term use. The corrugated plastic panels are also being used to conceal a traditional storefront building element, the "paneled bulkhead." **If the Commission feels they should be reviewed for compliance with the Guidelines, perhaps the Commission could consider an appropriate duration of time for approval to allow the applicant use of the corrugated plastic panels until the materials become damaged or weather worn. If the Commission does limit the duration of time, does the Commission think future replacement of the lower panels should be allowed?**

**Upper Transom Windows:** There are two proposed signs located on the transom windows. The Guidelines state that signs should not obscure important architectural details. The Guidelines also state that wall signs should be well positioned and appropriately sized within architectural features, such as the panels above storefronts or on the transom. **Does the Commission want to require the applicant to relocate the signage so that the transom windows are not obscured?** The applicant has indicated to staff

that it would be difficult to relocate the signage to the masonry above the windows since the corrugated plastic signage and velcro system has been designed to adhere to the wood and windows, not the masonry above the windows.

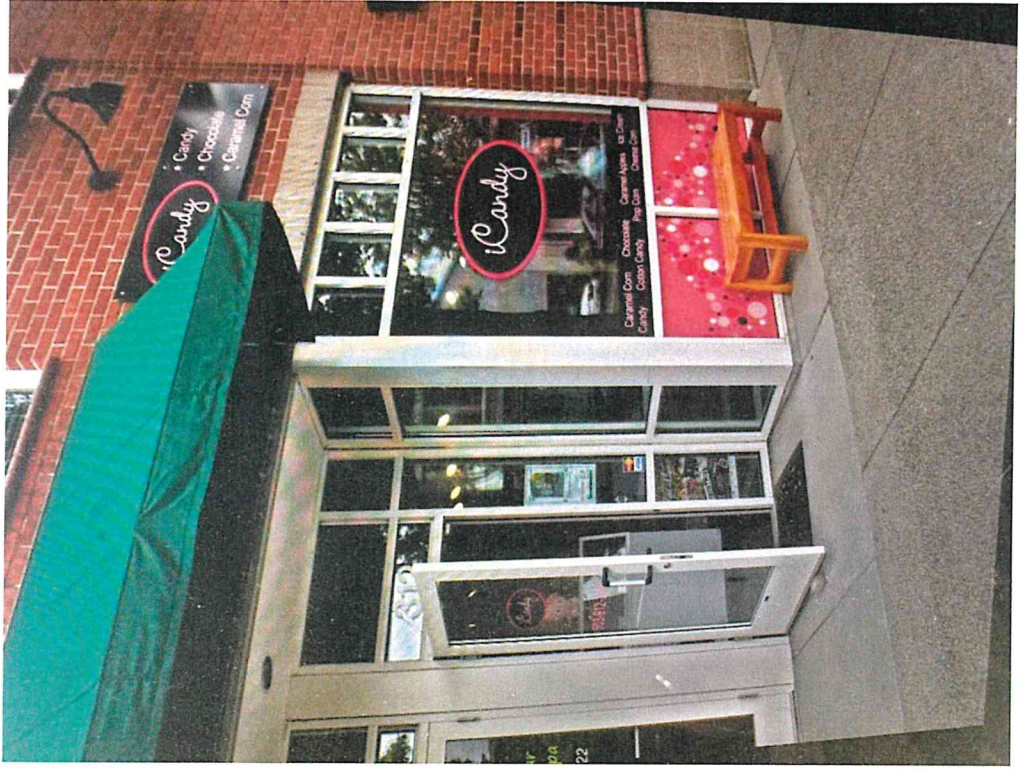
The Guidelines discuss drawing attention to the shop entrance or emphasizing a display window. Staff feels that the applicant does a great job doing this with the consistent colors and the bright pink themes used in the display window.

The Guidelines state that signage materials should be durable. Corrugated plastic is not a durable material, especially with rain and sun. Corrugated plastic is not listed in the acceptable signage materials list in the Guidelines. *Some options staff has considered that the Commission could consider are below. 1 and 2 could be combined, or 1 and 3 could be combined.*

- 1. The Commission could consider a condition which limits the signage to an acceptable duration of time given the limited durability.*
- 2. The Commission could require mandatory replacement if the signage becomes damaged/weathered.*
- 3. The Commission could consider disallowing reinstallation once the signage is removed after a limited duration given the durability concerns.*
- 4. The Commission could disallow the use of corrugated plastic immediately as an inappropriate signage material due to its low durability. This recommendation would result in the sign permit being denied on the basis that the signage proposed does not comply with the Guidelines.*

**Attached:** *Applicant's Materials (4 pages)*  
*Architectural Design Guidelines Excerpts (2 pages)*

Photos Provided by Applicant





*Lightning*  
**TREATS & SWEETS**

**CANDY**  
**IGLE GURFAM**  
cupcakes

291



**DELICIOUS SWEETS**



**DECADENT TREATS**



291

CUPCAKES

COMING SOON

Royal Effect Boutique

OPEN 10-6

Candy Cakes

8:50

◀ Gmail

5G 50

◀ Back New Prints for Lower Signage ▾



🔍 Search



Shared by Scott Elliott

Options



Below-Left-  
Front...5-in-H  
7/18/24

Added by  
Scott Elliott



Below-Left-  
Inner...5-in-H  
7/18/24

Added by  
Scott Elliott



Below-Right-  
Front...2-in-H  
7/18/24

Added by  
Scott Elliott



Below-Right-  
Inner...2-in-H  
7/18/24

Added by  
Scott Elliott

## 4. SIGNAGE

Signage that creates visual delight is preferred.

Commercial signs in Olde Towne should identify businesses, promote merchandise or service within, attract customers, provide direction and information, and in some cases create visual delight and architectural interest. Poor quality commercial signage creates an uninviting image and suggests lack of consideration for the historic character of the retail storefronts.

*NOTE: The following is meant as a supplement to the city's Sign Code. Sign permits, obtained through the Planning Department, are required pursuant to the St. Helens Development Code.*



When considering materials for signage, prioritize those that are locally harvested and/or extracted, contain recycled materials, rapidly renewable materials or Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified wood.

### 4.2 GENERAL GUIDANCE

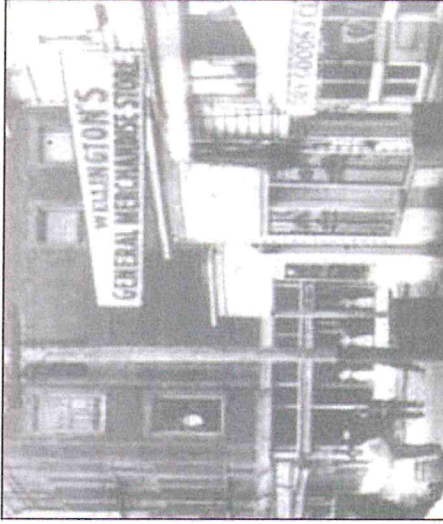
Signs should complement the historic and cultural significance of the area and be sensitive to existing architectural patterns and features found in Olde Towne.

- Signs should not obscure important architectural details.
- Signs should align with other signs on the block to create a pattern of horizontal and vertical façade features.
- Signs should be positioned to emphasize special shapes or details of the façade, draw attention to the shop entrance, or emphasize a display window.
- Buildings should use signs that are appropriately scaled, durable, and consistent with other signage in Olde Towne. Signs should be good neighbors within a block.
- Wall signs should be well positioned and appropriately sized within architectural features, such as the panels above storefronts on the primary or secondary building front, on the transom, or flanking doorways.
- Projecting signs should be positioned along the first floor level of the façade. Projecting signs may take on their own special shape, or create their own symbol within the overall façade design.

- Awnings may have building or business names or street address on the apron, but may not function as signs with extensive text areas.

**Murals shall not become a predominating visual element of the streetscape.**

- Murals must create and/or promote a similar character or feel to the Olde Towne district.
- Wall murals and other artwork of noncommercial nature should be sympathetic to historical context.



The Strand looking south c. 1913

### 4.3 EXISTING BUILDINGS

**Signs should be maintained; signs that are historically represented in photographs may be replaced given compliance with other sign regulation. Murals can be maintained or recreated based on evidence, or created to honor building history.**

- Honor historic uses of the structure by investing in mural refurbishment or depicting historically accurate ads, commercial displays, or logos previously displayed on the building.

### 4.4 NEW CONSTRUCTION

**Sign materials should be durable and easy to maintain.**

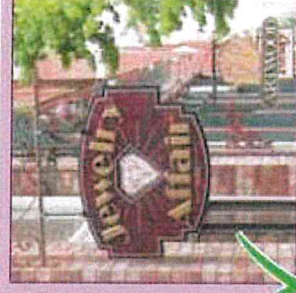
- Appropriate sign materials include painted or carved wood; carved wooden letters; epoxy letters; galvanized sheet metal; slate, marble, or sandstone; gold leaf; gilt, painted, stained, or sandblasted glass; clear and colored acrylic; neon; or stained glass.
- Lighting external to the sign surface with illumination directed toward the sign is preferred. Internally lit signs are generally discouraged.
- Light level should not overpower the façade or other signs on the street.

- The light source should be shielded from pedestrian view.
- Neon is acceptable, though can be restricted in size, if it does not obscure architectural detail or overly illuminate display windows. Neon lights should have an authentic, period or hand crafted look, and should not flash or otherwise vary in display.
- Lettering styles should be proportioned, simple, and easy to read. In most instances, a simple typeface is preferred over a faddish or overly ornate type style.
- As a general rule, the letterforms should occupy no more than 75% of the total sign panel.

### 4.5 FREESTANDING SIGNS

**The standards herein shall apply to freestanding signs as applicable.**

- As an independent feature, a freestanding sign should incorporate architectural features of the building it serves or otherwise complement the historic and cultural significance of the area and be sensitive to architectural patterns and features of Olde Towne.
- If freestanding sign will serve an existing building that is not compatible with the architectural patterns and features of Olde Towne, it should not reflect those incompatible features, but be compatible on its own.





Historic photos continued



**ABOVE & LEFT:** Two perspectives looking south along S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street at the intersection of S. 1<sup>st</sup> Street and St. Helens Street (c. 1930).