

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: 55 CROWN STREET, Authorization for Projecting Sign over City Sidewalk (Sign-A-Rama for Marco Polo Restaurant).
REPORT: 1431-10
ADVICE: Deny

BACKGROUND

Sign-A-Rama has petitioned the Board of Aldermen for a projecting sign for a business at 55 Crown Street, Marco Polo, a pizza and Italian restaurant in the Ninth Square which is under new ownership. 55 Crown Street is located on the north side of Crown Street, opposite the intersection of South Orange Street. The previous owner of the restaurant entered into an agreement with the City of New Haven and the Ninth Square Project Limited Partnership regarding a grant providing funds for façade and/or building improvements in 2006, including an existing illuminated sign mounted on the building façade (see attached photo).

The proposed projecting sign, showing the vertical word "PIZZA" with a telephone number beneath, would be mounted on two black metal brackets with lag bolts into the exterior brick surface of the building, overhanging the sidewalk by 2'-8" at a height of 10' above the sidewalk. The illuminated box sign itself measures 4' in height by 18" in width, and is 5" deep, with bright green and red colors.

The applicant notes that the previous owner was unable to make the restaurant a viable operation after investing over \$300,000 in remodeling costs. The applicant believes the lack of viability of the operation was due to poor visibility of the existing sign.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Board of Aldermen controls encroachments on the public right-of-way under the general authority of Section 49 of the Charter and Section 15-2 of the Code or Ordinances. The Commission advises the Board in considering proposals for appurtenances over City sidewalks, and looks at suitability of design, scale, durability of product and its supports, quality of construction materials, and height above the sidewalk in the light of potential vandalism. In cases where the location is within a Historic District or the building is historic in nature, the Commission looks further at whether the appurtenance is complimentary to the architecture of the building. In this case, 55 Crown Street is listed as a non-contributing property within the Ninth Square National Register Historic District.

The Commission notes that the existing illuminated sign was approved by the Design Review committee prior to the City's issuance of the façade grant noted in the text above. The façade grant has specific language in Section 204 which states the "Owner shall maintain or cause current and future tenants to maintain all applicable signage standards and façade improvements for a period of not less than six (6) years from the date hereof" which is December 14, 2006. Therefore in order for the applicant to proceed to change the appearance of the façade by adding yet another sign, they would need to have the permission of the Design Review committee which monitors the Façade Grant program to further alter the façade.

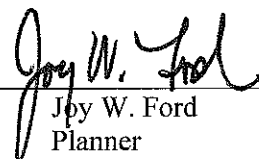
Further, even though 55 Crown Street is a non-contributing building within the historic district, the Commission believes that the additional sign detracts from the historic nature of the surrounding Ninth Square neighborhood. Most signs in this area are in scale with the older commercial buildings and do not detract from them and are lit by external spotlights and not internally illuminated.

ADVICE

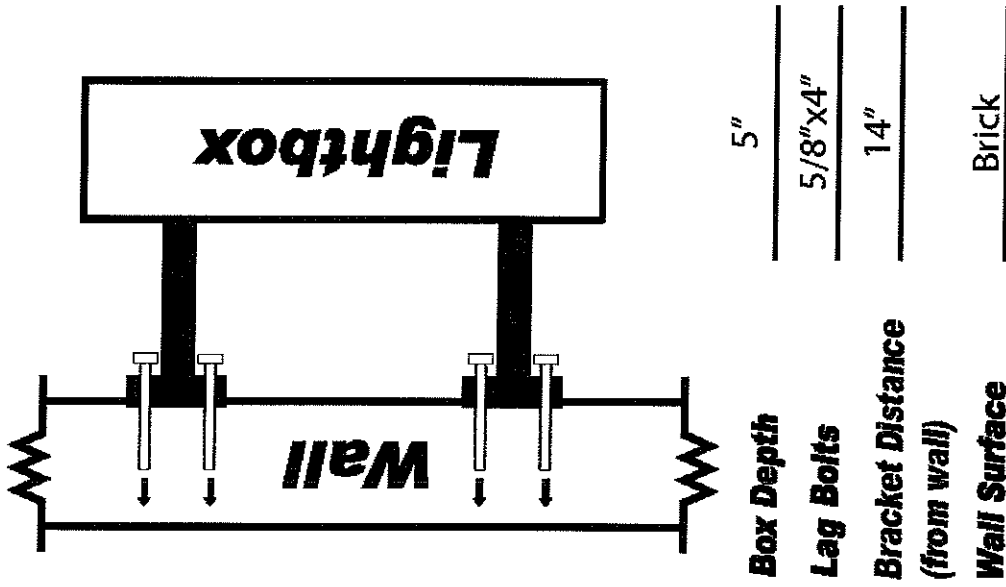
The City Plan Commission recommends that the Board of Aldermen deny the application for a new sign as its billboard nature is not in keeping with the historic neighborhood and as it is in violation of the Façade Grant Agreement by and between the City, Marco Polo Pizza, Inc. and Ninth Square Project Limited Partnership.

ADOPTED: August 19, 2009
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST:


Joy W. Ford
Planner

Side View of Mounting System



14"
Projection
from Wall

10'

Lightbox Proof (shown on building)

SIGN★A★RAMA
WHERE THE WORLD GOES FOR SIGNS

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Please Sign Here For Approval:

Proposed additional Sign

Signature

Date

MARCO POLO

Pizza & Italian Restaurant

WE DELIVER
777 MARCO

PIZZA • CALZONES

SALADS

SALADS

WRAPS

WRAPS

ATM

PASTA • HEROES

Stopp

Existing facade 15 Crown St.