



**City of Seattle**  
Edward B. Murray, Mayor

**Department of Planning and Development**  
D. M. Sugimura, Director

**CITY OF SEATTLE  
ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF  
THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Application Number:** 3018060  
**Applicant Name:** Zamberlin, Steve  
**Address of Proposal:** 1415 5th Ave

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION**

Land Use Application to allow one additional pole sign on 5th Avenue accessory to the Motif Hotel.

The following approval is required:

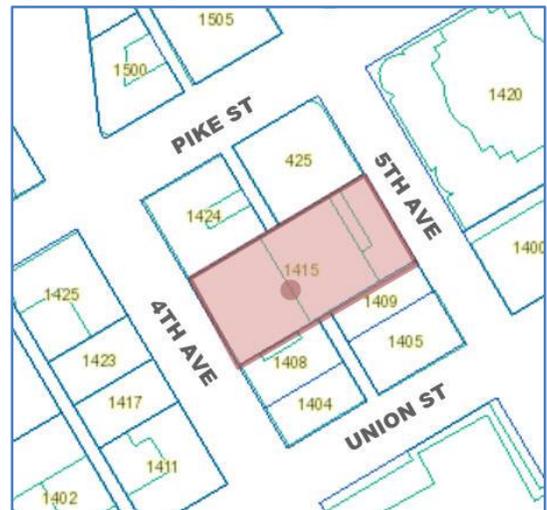
**Special Exception** – To allow installation of one sign within 300 feet of another sign.  
Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Section 23.55.040.

**SEPA DETERMINATION:**  Exempt  DNS  MDNS  EIS  
 DNS with conditions  
 DNS involving non-exempt grading, or demolition, or involving another agency with jurisdiction.

**BACKGROUND DATA**

Site and Vicinity Description

The proposal site is the midblock along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave and 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, between Pike St and Union St in Seattle’s Downtown Retail Core. The site is currently occupied by the Motif Hotel. The proposal site is located within the boundaries of the Downtown Retail Core (DRC) zone designation. The zone continues to north, east and west of the proposal site. Across Union Street to the south, the DRC zone designation gives way to the Downtown



Office Core (DOC) zone designation. Development in the vicinity consists almost exclusively of office, hotel, personal and household retail sales and service uses including many nationally known retailers.

### Background

Pursuant to SMC Section 23.55.034, one projecting sign is permitted for every 300 lineal feet of frontage a proposal site has along a street right-of-way. Because the project has approximately 240 lineal feet of frontage only one sign is permitted outright. An additional sign can only be allowed by Special Exception.

### Proposal Description

The proposed aluminum sign is shaped in the angular form consistent with the Motif hotel branding, and similar to the existing monumental sign denoting the hotel entry. The sign will be mounted with a concrete footing inside an existing planter. The illumination will be LEDs concealed behind a white acrylic face along the sides of the sign as well as the parking symbol and logo.

The proposed sign would be attached atop the existing planter, at approximately three feet above the 5th Ave sidewalk right of way. The parking that the sign will be identifying is located off to the south of the parking garage entrance.

### Public Comment

No written comments were received during the public comment period ending on November 12, 2014

### **ANALYSIS – SPECIAL EXCEPTION**

Pursuant to the requirements of SMC Section 23.55.040, the Director may authorize exceptions to the size, number, height, and depth of projection of on-premises signs. The decision by the Director is made after consultation with the Design Commission. In order for the Director to approve a special exception the proposed project must meet one codified condition and must exhibit at least one codified desired characteristic.

### Design Commission Comment

The project was referred to the Seattle Design Commission and reviewed by the Chair and Design Commission staff. Commission comment is contained in the project file in a letter from the Design Commission dated February 20th, 2015. For the purposes of the Design Commission review, comment was based on the overall signage scheme and was further informed by drawings and supporting materials for the original variance application.

The Design Commission recommended approval of a special exception to the sign permit, to accommodate a second pole sign along the 5<sup>th</sup> Ave façade to complement the existing pole sign on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Commission recommendations are summarized and bulleted below:

1. While the existing parking sign was not permitted, we see merit in more clearly directing hotel guests to the garage to avoid confusion, congestion, and potential traffic hazards.

2. The color palette and design of the proposed parking sign complement other signage for the hotel, are simple and clear, and create a consistent identify for the hotel.
3. We appreciate that including the hotel name on the parking sign makes the sign more effective for hotel visitors potentially unfamiliar with the hotel's brand and color scheme. We do not believe the hotel name in itself adds visual clutter to the area.
4. The sign is located adjacent to a sidewalk but, at 11 feet high, is out of scale with pedestrian activity. Given that it is elevated on an existing three-foot-high planter, the sign need be no more than eight feet above the sidewalk to direct motorists to the garage while maintaining a human scale

### Special Exception Criteria

Conditions and desired characteristics are codified in SMC Sections 23.55.040.A and 23.55.040.B, respectively. Codified conditions and characteristics are italicized.

#### A. *Conditions.*

1. *The proposed sign plan shows an exceptional effort toward creating visual harmony among signs, desirable streetscape features, building facades and other architectural elements of the building structure through the use of a consistent design theme;*

The signage plan enhances the site through the use of a harmonious and consistent design theme. The parking sign is proposed to unify the overall sign plan, and create an easier visual reference for guests and other trying to locate the hotel's parking facility. Designed to enhance the visual quality of the property and provide an inviting entrance, the signage and lighting features retain the same aesthetic qualities. Through the use of well-defined and consistent color palettes the proposed sign compliments the other signage in shape and color as it reinforces the architectural features of the main identification sign.

2. *The proposed sign plan will preserve existing design or siting pattern for the signs in the area:*

The proposed sign plan preserves existing siting patterns in the vicinity. The applicant is proposing the sign in the same location as an existing sign identifying the parking garage entry. Elevated on an existing three-foot-high planter, the existing sign is approximately six feet in total height. The proposed sign will also be located on top of this planter. As the sign is adjacent to the sidewalk, the Design Commission noted that height recommended the sign need be no more than eight feet above the sidewalk to direct motorists to the garage while maintaining a human scale. The applicant has provided options showing the signage at such a height and has demonstrated that such a design is compatible and consistent with the existing design and siting patterns.

3. *The proposed sign plan will reduce views of historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board no more than would be permitted by a sign permitted outright without a special exception.*

No historic landmarks designated by the Landmarks Preservation Board are located in the vicinity of the sign.

*B. Desired Characteristics. All the following desired characteristics shall be used to evaluate applications for a special exception, and at least one (1) must be met. The proposed sign(s):*

- 1. Unifies the project as a whole or contributes positively to a comprehensive building and tenant signage plan;*

The existing signage is not consistent in design, style or color. The proposed signage is uniform in design and color with the other signage for the hotel.

- 2. Is compatible with the building facade and scale of building in terms of size, height and location;*

The proposed sign options shown at no more than eight feet above the sidewalk are compatible with the building façade and with the scale of building in terms of size, height and location. These options support the desired characteristic of unifying the project as a whole, the compatibility with the building and pedestrian scale, and integrating mounting and support fixtures. Mounting and support elements of the structure are designed such that they are unobtrusive and sensitively mounted. These aspects of the signage configuration contribute to satisfying the requisite condition that the project show an effort towards creating a visual harmony among building facades and other architectural elements in terms of size, height and location.

- 3. Adds interest to the street level environment, while also identifying upper level businesses;*

The new signage will enhance the site and reduce visual clutter through the proper integration of one unified design theme at the exterior of the building.

- 4. Helps orient pedestrians and motorists at street-level in the vicinity of the subject building;*

The proposed sign directs pedestrians and motorists to the parking entrance. The parking entrance for the hotel is located on 5th Ave, a one way street with traffic flowing south. Currently there are a number of safety and traffic gridlock concerns due to the poorly marked parking signage. The hotel property has setback of 50 feet from the sidewalk and the parking entrance is largely blocked from view due to the location of the buildings north of the parking entrance. The proposed signage works to clearly identify the hotel's parking entrance.

- 5. Integrates support fixtures, conduits, wiring, switches and other mounting apparatus into the building architecture to the extent feasible.*

The proposed sign supports the desired characteristic to integrate mounting and support fixtures. Mounting and support elements of the structure are designed such that they are unobtrusive and sensitively mounted.

#### Discussion and Analysis

The proposed project satisfies the condition that the sign plan show an effort towards creating a consistent design theme which creates visual harmony among signs, streetscape elements, building façades, and elements of the building structure. Moreover, this effort is supported by multiple desired characteristics.

Specifically, the proposed signage plan is compatible with existing design and siting pattern for signs in the area. Given the applicant is proposing the sign in the same location of an existing sign, it is clear that the location is compatible with the siting pattern. Elevated on an existing three-foot-high planter, the proposed sign at a height of eight feet above the sidewalk, will direct motorists to the garage while maintaining a human scale compatible with existing design.

The overall signage plan provides a unified concept which relates well to itself, desirable elements of the streetscape, and the existing structure. Additionally, this effort unifies the project as a whole, contributes to way finding and orientation in the Downtown Retail Core. These aspects of the signage plan contribute to satisfying the requisite condition that the project show an effort towards creating a visual harmony among signs, consistent with an overall theme. These aspects are supported by the desired characteristics of unifying the project as a whole, compatible with existing siting pattern for signs in the area and contributing to way finding and orientation for pedestrians and motorists.

In conclusion, the overall signage plan satisfy the condition of showing an effort towards creating a visual harmony among its own elements as well as with elements semi-private and public built environment. Moreover, the signage plan displays a variety of codified desirable characteristics.

### **DECISION – SPECIAL EXCEPTION**

The Special Exception to allow the installation of a sign within 300 feet of another sign is Conditionally Granted.

### **CONDITIONS**

#### *For the life of the project*

The proposed sign shall be no more than eight feet above the sidewalk.

Signature: retagonzales-cunneutabby for \_\_\_\_\_ Date: June 8, 2015  
Magda Hogness, Land Use Planner  
Department of Planning and Development

MH:rgc  
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### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR ISSUANCE OF YOUR MASTER USE PERMIT**

#### Master Use Permit Expiration and Issuance

The appealable land use decision on your Master Use Permit (MUP) application has now been published. At the conclusion of the appeal period, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance”. (If your decision is appealed, your permit will be considered “approved for issuance” on the fourth day following the City Hearing Examiner’s decision.) Projects requiring a Council land use action shall be considered “approved for issuance” following the Council’s decision.

The “approved for issuance” date marks the beginning of the **three year life** of the MUP approval, whether or not there are outstanding corrections to be made or pre-issuance conditions to be met. The permit must be issued by DPD within that three years or it will expire and be cancelled (SMC 23-76-028). (Projects with a shoreline component have a **two year life**. Additional information regarding the effective date of shoreline permits may be found at 23.60.074.)

All outstanding corrections must be made, any pre-issuance conditions met and all outstanding fees paid before the permit is issued. You will be notified when your permit has issued.

Questions regarding the issuance and expiration of your permit may be addressed to the Public Resource Center at [prc@seattle.gov](mailto:prc@seattle.gov) or to our message line at 206-684-8467.