



The City of Seattle

## Pioneer Square Preservation Board

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PSB 143/24

### Staff REPORT

for Board meeting June 5, 2024

Board Members Please Note: The citations from the District Ordinance, Rules for the Pioneer Square Preservation District, and Secretary of the Interior's Standards listed below are for your consideration in addition to any other citations you find relevant in considering each application.

**060524.51**     Washington Street Boat Landing

Molly Moons Ice Cream

199 Alaskan Way

Applicant: Noreen Shinohara, Graham Baba

Staff report: The Washington Street Boat Landing, originally known as the Seattle Harbor Department is within the Pioneer Square Preservation District boundaries but is also independently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 2013 the Pergola structure was temporarily removed for the rebuilding of the seawall. In 2016 Rehabilitation of the building began while in storage and was then moved back to the site in 2017 where the rehabilitation was completed.

The Board has reviewed briefings for the proposal at the October 18, 2023 meeting March 6 and May 15, 2024 meetings.

The proposal includes three neon signs, and an exterior lit blade sign for a total of 4 signs.

Blade sign: 6 square feet externally lit blade sign complies with the regulations.

"Molly Moon's" neon sign facing Alaskan Way includes letters "ll" are 1' 3 7/8" and the "y" is 1' 4 1/2". The rest of the letters are 9 3/4 inches. This sign requests an exception to the rules.

"Ice Cream" neon sign letters size facing Alaskan Way are all 1' 2 1/2" all larger than 10 inches. This sign requests an exception to the rules.

"Ice Cream" neon sign on the north façade has been reduced to 17 7/8 inches. This sign requests an exception to the rules. The letters are all larger than the maximum 12 inches allowed in the sign bands. While not yet adopted the Board has drafted a change to allow letter size up to 18 inches in a sign band. The sign requests an exception to the existing 12-inch limit but consistent with the proposed guideline 18-inch limit.

**Administered by The Historic Preservation Program  
The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**

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The Board will need to articulate the reason for any exceptions, including how the context of this site is different than other locations. to avoid challenges to our otherwise consistent application of the guidelines. Staff has tried to summarize the previous discussion on the reasons for the exception but the person making the exception can add to or eliminate reasons based on the discussion at this final review committee meeting.

Draft Motion:

I move to recommend granting a Certificate of Approval for signage including two neon hanging signs, an externally lit blade sign and a neon wall sign.

All per the applicant's submittal under the condition that Molly Moon's repair by methods consistent with the previously approved rehabilitation of the structure any wholes made to attach signage if the business vacates the site.

Exceptions to the Pioneer Square Preservation guidelines are granted considering the specific unique context of the Washington Boat Landing structure:

The location of structure is isolated from other buildings along the waterfront, and Pioneer Square;

The multi-lane Alaskan Way is greater than the typical distance across a street in Pioneer Square. The distance necessitates larger letters for the signage to be visible to pedestrians from a greater distance to draw pedestrians to the site;

The structure is also separated from other structures along the waterfront by the ferry load and unloading lanes and a beach so the greater than typical distance between buildings in Pioneer Square necessitates larger letters for the signage to be visible to pedestrians from a greater distance than other locations in Pioneer Square to draw pedestrians to the site;

Because of the isolation of the structure and the low lighting levels, lit signage is needed for visibility and neon signage is a common signage style compatible with the age of the structure;

The structure has been vacant for decades and visible signage will facilitate the recognition that there is a new active use at the site;

The Board found that the signage is pedestrian oriented and complies with Seattle Municipal Code for signage even with the exceptions to the guidelines, in particular SMC 23.66.160 C 1 and 4;

The Board directs staff to prepare a written recommendation of approval based on considering the application submittal and Board discussion at the *June 5, 2024* public meeting and forward this written recommendation to the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

Code Citations:

SMC

23.66.030 Certificates of Approval required

- A. Certificate of approval required. No person shall alter, demolish, construct, reconstruct, restore, remodel, make any visible change to the exterior appearance of any structure, or to the public rights-of-way or other public spaces

in a special review district, and no one shall remove or substantially alter any existing sign or erect or place any new sign or change the principal use of any building, or any portion of a building, structure or lot in a special review district, and no permit for such activity shall be issued unless a certificate of approval has been issued by the Department of Neighborhoods Director.

#### 23.66.160 Signs

- B. To ensure that flags, banners and signs are of a scale, color, shape and type compatible with the Pioneer Square Preservation District objectives stated in Section 23.66.100 and with the character of the District and the buildings in the District, to reduce driver distraction and visual blight, to ensure that the messages of signs are not lost through undue proliferation, and to enhance views and sight lines into and down streets, the overall design of a sign, flag, or banner, including size, shape, typeface, texture, method of attachment, color, graphics and lighting, and the number and location of signs, flags, and banners, shall be reviewed by the Board and are regulated as set out in this Section 23.66.160. Building owners are encouraged to develop an overall signage plan for their buildings.
- C. In determining the appropriateness of signs, including flags and banners used as signs as defined in Section 23.84A.036, the Preservation Board shall consider the following:
  - 1. Signs Attached or Applied to Structures.
    - a. The relationship of the shape of the proposed sign to the architecture of the building and with the shape of other approved signs located on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - b. The relationship of the texture of the proposed sign to the building for which it is proposed, and with other approved signs located on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - c. The possibility of physical damage to the structure and the degree to which the method of attachment would conceal or disfigure desirable architectural features or details of the structure (the method of attachment shall be approved by the Director);
    - d. The relationship of the proposed colors and graphics with the colors of the building and with other approved signs on the building or in proximity to the proposed sign;
    - e. The relationship of the proposed sign with existing lights and lighting standards, and with the architectural and design motifs of the building;
    - f. Whether the proposed sign lighting will detract from the character of the building; and
    - g. The compatibility of the colors and graphics of the proposed sign with the character of the District.
  - 4. When determining the appropriate size of a sign the Board and the Director of Neighborhoods shall also consider the function of the sign and the character and scale of buildings in the immediate vicinity, the character and scale of the building for which the sign is proposed, the proposed location of the sign on the

building's exterior, and the total number and size of signs proposed or existing on the building.

6. Projecting signs and neon signs may be recommended only if the Preservation Board determines that all other criteria for permitted signs have been met and that historic precedent, locational or visibility concerns of the business for which the signing is proposed warrant such signing.

## **RULES FOR THE PIONEER SQUARE PRESERVATION DISTRICT**

### **XX. RULES FOR TRANSPARENCY, SIGNS, AWNINGS AND CANOPIES**

The Pioneer Square Preservation Ordinance reflects a policy to focus on structures, individually and collectively, so that they can be seen and appreciated. Sign proliferation or inconsistent paint colors, for example, are incompatible with this focus, and are expressly to be avoided. (8/93)

#### **B. General Signage Regulations**

All signs on or hanging from buildings, in windows, or applied to windows, are subject to review and approval by the Pioneer Square Preservation Board. (8/93)  
Locations for signs shall be in accordance with all other regulations for signage. (12/94)

The intent of sign regulations is to ensure that signs relate physically and visually to their location; that signs not hide, damage or obscure the architectural elements of the building; that signs be oriented toward and promote a pedestrian environment; and that the products or services offered be the focus, rather than signs. (8/93)

#### **C. Specific Signage Regulations**

1. Letter Size. Letter size in windows, awnings and hanging signs shall be consistent with the scale of the architectural elements of the building (as per SMC 23.66.160),...
3. Projecting Elements (e.g. blade signs, banners, flags and awnings). There shall be a limit of one projecting element, e.g. a blade sign, banner, or awning per address.
4. Blade signs (signs hanging perpendicular to the building). Blade signs shall be installed below the intermediate cornice or second floor of the building, and in such a manner that they do not hide, damage, or obscure the architectural elements of the building. Typically, non-illuminated blade signs will be limited to eight (8) square feet. (12/94)

#### **D. NEON SIGNS**

1. The number of neon signs shall be limited to one for each 10 linear feet of business frontage for the first forty feet of business, and one for each additional 15 feet of frontage for businesses over forty feet.
3. No more than three colors, including neon tubes and any backing materials, shall be used on any neon sign. Transparent backing materials are preferred. Neon colors shall be subdued. (8/93, 7/03)

4. Neon is permitted only as signage and shall not be used as decorative trim.  
(8/93)

**Secretary of Interior's Standards**

9. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Issued: May 29, 2024

Genna Nashem  
Pioneer Square Preservation Board Coordinator