

# HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

## Smiths Market Monument Sign PLNHLC2013-00558 402 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue December 5, 2013



Planning and Zoning Division  
Department of Community and  
Economic Development

**Applicant:**

Smiths Foods, Richard Forsyth  
representative

**Staff:**

Ray Milliner (801) 535-7645  
[ray.milliner@slcgov.com](mailto:ray.milliner@slcgov.com)

**Current Zone:**

Community Business (CB)

**Master Plan Designation:**

Open Space

**Council District:**

3, Stan Penfold

**Parcel Number:**

09-31-430-015

**Current Use:**

Multi-Tenant Commercial

**Applicable Land Use  
Regulations:**

- 21A.26.030 CB
- 21A.34.020(G & H)

**Notification**

- Notice mailed on  
November 27, 2013.
- Property Posted November  
26, 2013
- Agenda posted on the  
Planning Division and Utah  
Public Meeting Notice  
websites November 27,  
2013

**Attachments**

- A. Information from  
Applicant
- B. Site Plans
- C. Photos

### ***Request***

This is a request by Smith's Foods, represented by Richard Forsyth, to allow the internal illumination of an existing monument sign at 402 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Currently the sign is lit with ground mounted spot lights.

### ***Staff Recommendation***

Staff recommends that the Historic Landmark Commission review the application, and deny the petition to internally illuminate the existing monument sign at Smith's Foods pursuant to the findings and analysis in this staff report.

### ***Potential Motions***

**Denial:** Based on the testimony, plans presented and the findings and analysis in this staff report, I move that the Historic Landmark Commission deny the Certificate of Appropriateness to internally illuminate the monument sign at 402 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

**Approval:** Based on the testimony and plans presented following findings of fact, I move that the Historic Landmark Commission approve the Certificate of Appropriateness to internally illuminate the monument sign at 402 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

(commissioner would then state findings for approval from the standards listed below):

1. Scale and Form
2. Composition of Principal Facades
3. Relationship to Street
4. Subdivision of Lots

## Vicinity Map



## Background

The petitioner, Smith's Foods, represented by Richard Forsyth, is requesting approval to convert an externally illuminated monument sign to an internally illuminated sign. Smith's Foods grocery store is the primary tenant of a multi-unit commercial building located at 402 East 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Access to the grocery store is from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, while access to the secondary tenants on the lower floor is from a driveway access on E Street. The existing sign is approximately 6 feet tall by 4 feet wide and is used to identify the tenants on the lower floor. Currently it is illuminated by two spot lights that are affixed to the ground and shine toward the sign. The applicant states that these lights are frequently vandalized and broken (see photograph attachment C) and as a result, would like to internally illuminate the sign by installing lights inside the existing cabinet. The existing sign is equipped to house an internal lighting source.

Staff discussions with the applicant revolved around the appropriate style of lighting for the sign. Staff suggested that the sign continue to be lit by an external source, possibly a light attached to the top of the sign that would shine down on the lettering, but the applicant indicated that he would like to proceed with the internal illumination option. Therefore, staff is requesting that the Historic Landmark Commission review the petition.

The proposed sign is located within the Avenues Historic District. The Historic Landmark Commission has the authority to regulate signs to ensure that new and altered signs are appropriate for the historic setting.

## **Public Comments**

As of the time of publication of this report, staff has received no public comments relating to the illumination of the sign.

## **Zoning Ordinance and Design Guideline Review**

**21A.26.030 CB Community Business District:** “The CB community business district is intended to provide for the close integration of moderately sized commercial areas with adjacent residential neighborhoods. The design guidelines are intended to facilitate retail that is pedestrian in its orientation and scale, while also acknowledging the importance of transit and automobile access to the site.”

**21A.46.090 Sign Regulations for Mixed Use and Commercial Districts:** “Signage in the R-MU-35, R-MU-45, R-MU, MU, SNB, CN and CB districts should be appropriate for small scale commercial uses and business districts. These districts are located in proximity to residential areas or, in the case of the R-MU-35, R-MU-45, R-MU and MU districts, contain a residential/commercial mix of uses. The sign regulations for these districts are intended to permit signage that is appropriate for small scale commercial uses and business districts, with minimum impacts on nearby residential uses.”

**Analysis:** Staff has reviewed the project for compliance with all applicable standards in the CB zone as well as specific requirements for signs in the sign section of the Zoning Ordinance, and found that it meets the minimum standards for height, setbacks, maximum area and number of signs allowed. Nonetheless, staff also found the changes to the sign are not consistent with the stated purpose of either the CB zone or the sign regulations for mixed use and commercial districts when considering the historic setting in which it is located.

Historically, following the arrival of electricity, it was common to illuminate signs with light fixtures which was accomplished by a installing a simple fixture above a sign which shone directly on the advertisement. Light fixtures were commonly simple in design so that the primary focus of the viewer would be on the sign rather than the light fixture. Internally illuminated signs were introduced in Salt Lake City in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, well after the historically significant era of the Avenues neighborhood (approximately 1880 – 1930).

Because the proposed sign is within a historic district and neighborhood, the visual impact of an internally illuminated sign will diminish the historic nature of the Avenues historic district. Preserving historic resources by minimizing the negative impacts of inappropriate design features are key ingredients in neighborhood livability and quality of life.

**Finding:** Staff finds that the proposal to internally illuminate the existing sign at Smith’s Foods is not compatible with the purpose statements for either the CB zone or the Sign Regulations for Mixed Use and Commercial Districts because it would have a negative impact on nearby residents because of the historic setting in which it is proposed.

**Section 21A.34.020.H Standards For Certificate Of Appropriateness Involving New Construction Or Alteration Of A Noncontributing Structure:** In considering an application for a certificate of appropriateness involving new construction, or alterations of noncontributing structures, the Historic Landmark Commission, or planning director when the application involves the alteration of a noncontributing structure, shall determine whether the project substantially complies with all of the following standards that pertain to the application, is visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape as illustrated in any design standards adopted by the Historic Landmark Commission and City Council and is in the best interest of the city:

## 1. Scale and Form:

- a) **Height and Width:** The proposed height and width shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;
- b) **Proportion of Principal Facades:** The relationship of the width to the height of the principal elevations shall be in scale with surrounding structures and streetscape;
- c) **Roof Shape:** The roof shape of a structure shall be visually compatible with the surrounding structures and streetscape; and
- d) **Scale of a Structure:** The size and mass of the structures shall be visually compatible with the size and mass of surrounding structure and streetscape.

## Applicable Sign Guideline Objectives

5. To allow each individual business to clearly identify itself and the goods and services which it offers in a clear and distinctive manner.
6. To promote signs as pedestrian oriented rather than automotive, which is consistent with the historic character.

## Applicable Sign Guidelines

### Guideline 13

Illumination of a sign should be done with the objective of achieving a balance between the architecture, the historic district and the sign.

- The color and intensity of illumination are central to achieving a complementary balance of buildings and signs
- Unless historically documented, intermittent or flashing light sources should be avoided.
- The sign illumination source should be shielded and directed only toward the sign to minimize glare.
- Light intensity should not overpower the building or street edge.
- Small and discreet modern light fittings may provide an unobtrusive alternative to traditionally styled lamp units.

**Analysis:** The size, style and design of the existing sign are appropriate for the site as it relates to the architectural design and context of the Smith's Foods building and the Avenues Historic District. The internal illumination of the sign would alter the complimentary balance between the building and the sign by making it a focal point for both pedestrians and motorists. The illumination would also disrupt the contextual balance between the sign and the historic district by introducing a feature that was not seen in Salt Lake City until well after the historically significant era of the Avenues. The installation of an external lighting source that is shielded and down directed toward the sign would provide adequate illumination on the sign, as well as maintain the contextual and architectural balance between the sign and the surrounding vernacular.

**Finding:** Staff finds that the scale and form of the proposed sign is not appropriate for the context and architecture of neither the Smith's Foods building nor the Avenues Historic District. The proposal does not meet this standard.

## 2. Composition of Principal Facades:

- a) **Proportion of Openings:** The relationship of the width to the height of windows and doors of the structure shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;
- b) **Rhythm of Solids to Voids in Facades:** The relationship of solids to voids in the facade of the structure shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape;
- c) **Rhythm of Entrance Porch and Other Projections:** The relationship of entrances and other projections to sidewalks shall be visually compatible with surrounding structures and streetscape; and
- d) **Relationship of Materials:** The relationship of the color and texture of materials (other than paint color) of the facade shall be visually compatible with the predominant materials used in surrounding structures and streetscape.

## Applicable Sign Guidelines

### Guideline 15

The illumination source for a sign should be compatible with both the sign and building.

- Light can be directed at the sign from an external, shielded lamp
- All sign lighting should be shielded and directed only toward the sign
- Internal illumination of the lettering only is most appropriate if internal illumination is used

**Analysis:** The existing architectural composition of the sign is visually compatible with the surrounding structures and streetscape in that it is made of similar materials and is of an appropriate scale. Directing light at the sign from an external shielded lamp would allow the sign to maintain its compatibility and be seen at night. The introduction of internal illumination would render the sign incompatible with the surrounding uses and architecture because the lighting, materials and design of the sign would not be visually compatible with those along the streetscape.

**Finding:** Staff finds that the architectural composition of the sign draws upon the fundamental design elements of the surrounding buildings and streetscape. Staff finds that the introduction of internal illumination makes the sign incompatible with the surrounding buildings and streetscape. The proposed changes do not meet this standard.

## 3. Relationship to Street:

- a) **Walls Of Continuity:** Facades and site structures, such as walls, fences and landscape masses, shall, when it is characteristic of the area, form continuity along a street to ensure visual compatibility with the structures, public ways and places to which such elements are visually related;
- b) **Rhythm Of Spacing And Structures On Streets:** The relationship of a structure or object to the open space between it and adjoining structures or objects shall be visually compatible with the structures, objects, public ways and places to which it is visually related;
- c) **Directional Expression of Principal Elevation:** A structure shall be visually compatible with the structures, public ways and places to which it is visually related in its orientation toward the street; and
- d) **Streetscape Pedestrian Improvements:** Streetscape and pedestrian improvements and any change in its appearance shall be compatible to the historic character of the landmark site or H historic

preservation overlay district.

### **Applicable Sign Guideline Objectives**

3. To encourage signs which, by their appropriate design, are integrated with and harmonious to the buildings and sites which they occupy.
4. To preserve and improve the appearance of the City as an historic community in which to live and work.

### **Applicable Sign Guidelines**

#### **Guideline 33**

Monument signs are a less obtrusive alternative to a pole sign and animated signs.

- Signs must be compatible with the architecture of the building to which they are associated
- Lighting of monument signs is permitted, provided that the lighting is shielded and directed only toward the sign.
- Internally illuminated monument signs should be avoided

#### **Guideline 19**

The use of internally illuminated sign faces should be limited to individual cut out letters. The use of large panel internally illuminated signs is not recommended.

- The plastic or vinyl faces used for internally illuminated signs are discouraged in the historic district
- Individual pan-channel letters with a plastic face or individual cutout letters and letters routed out of the face of an opaque cabinet sign may be used
- The light source for internally illuminated signs should be white.

**Analysis:** The sign is located in the front yard setback of the property, in a spot that is easily visible from E Street. The current form of the sign is compatible with the structures, objects, public ways and places to which it is visually related. The sign is visible and readable without standing out as obtrusive. The internal illumination of the sign would disrupt that compatibility by drawing a significant amount of attention to the sign that is not necessary. As stated, above, the installation of an external lighting source that shines down upon the sign would achieve the need to light the sign and still enable it to be compatible with the streetscape, and neighborhood.

**Finding:** Staff finds that the proposed internal illumination of the sign is not appropriate for the rhythm of spacing along E Street because it is visually incompatible with the structures, objects, public ways and places to which it is visually related.

### **5.Subdivision Of Lots:**

The planning director shall review subdivision plats proposed for property within an H historic preservation overlay district or of a landmark site and may require changes to ensure the proposed subdivision will be compatible with the historic character of the district and/or site(s).

**Finding:** This standard is not relevant since a subdivision of lots is not part of the proposed project.

**Attachment A**  
Letter from Applicant

July 30, 2013

Smith's Avenues  
402 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
E Street Monument sign remodel

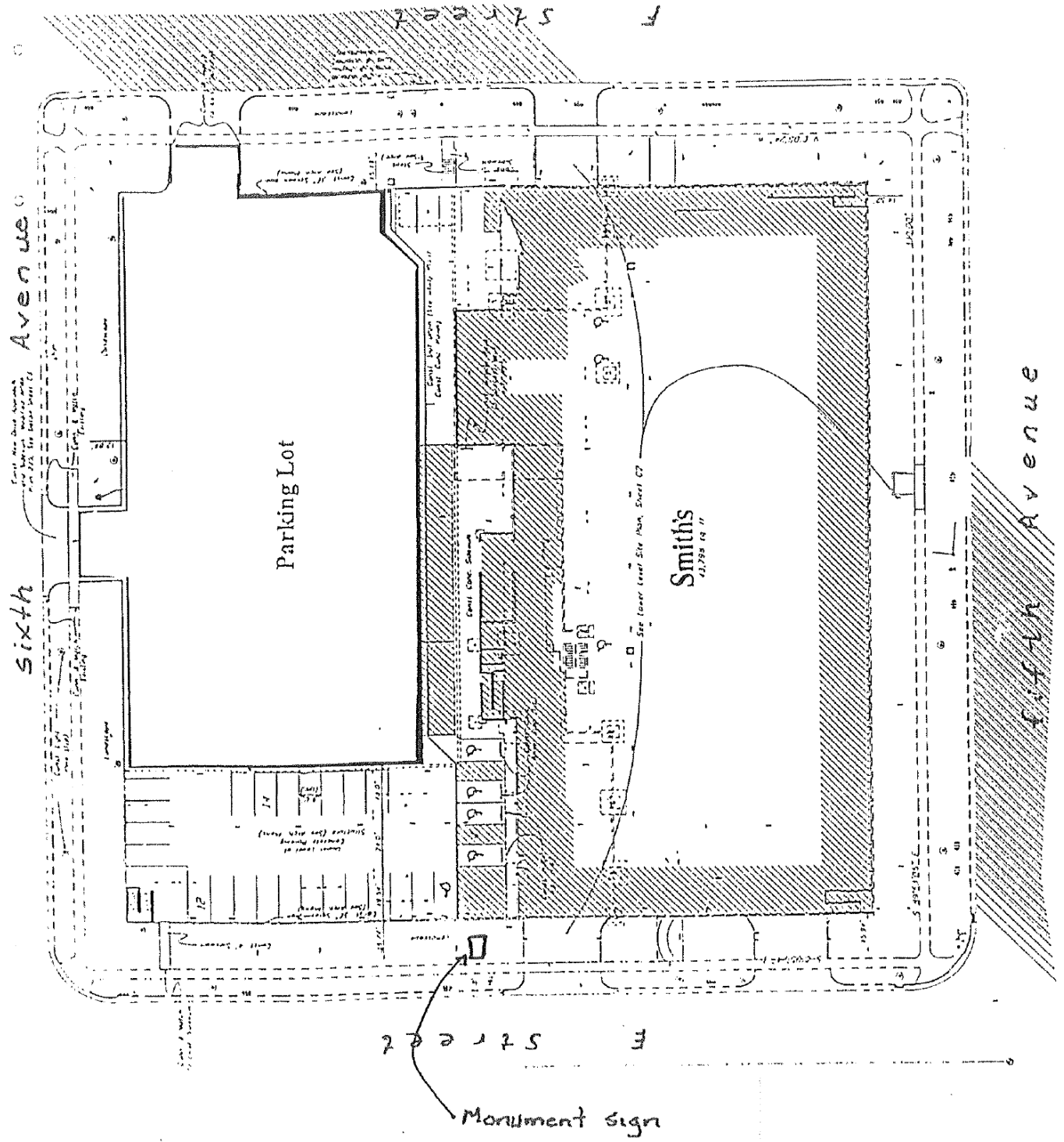
The E Street monument sign at the entry to the Smith's Avenues Shops is currently illuminated by two (2) ground mounted spot lights. Please refer to photos. The current lighting system has been the target of vandals who have damaged or destroyed the lights many times. We propose installation of internal lighting for this monument sign to eliminate repair costs.

Light fixtures will be installed inside the sign cabinet and the lights will be controlled by a time clock. The lighting can be timed to coincide with store hours (dusk to close).

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**Attachment B**  
Site Plan



**Attachment C**  
Photos

