

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

May 19, 2021

HDRC CASE NO: 2021-219
ADDRESS: 1630 E HOUSTON ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 577 BLK 16 LOT 8 & N 17 FT OF 9
ZONING: C-2, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 2
DISTRICT: Dignowity Hill Historic District
APPLICANT: Mario Barajas/Mario Electric
OWNER: john balderrama/BALDERRAMA JOHN R & JOHN P
TYPE OF WORK: Signage
APPLICATION RECEIVED: April 29, 2021
60-DAY REVIEW: Not applicable due to City Council Emergency Orders
CASE MANAGER: Edward Hall

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install signage at 1630 E Houston Street, located within the Dignowity Hill Historic District. The proposed signage is to include an internally illuminated cabinet and internally illuminated channel letters.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 6, Guidelines for Signage

A. GENERAL

- i. Number and size*—Each building will be allowed one major and two minor signs. Total requested signage should not exceed 50 square feet.
- ii. New signs*—Select the type of sign to be used based on evidence of historic signs or sign attachment parts along the building storefront where possible. Design signs to respect and respond to the character and/or period of the area in which they are being placed. Signs should identify the tenant without creating visual clutter or distracting from building features and historic districts.
- iii. Scale*—Design signage to be in proportion to the facade, respecting the building's size, scale and mass, height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. Scale signage (in terms of its height and width) to be subordinate to the overall building composition.

B. HISTORIC SIGNS

- i. Preservation*—Preserve historic signs, such as ghost signs or other signs characteristic of the building's or district's period of significance, whenever possible.
- ii. Maintenance*—Repair historic signs and replace historic parts in-kind when deteriorated beyond repair.

C. PLACEMENT AND INSTALLATION

- i. Location*—Place signs where historically located and reuse sign attachment parts where they exist. Do not erect signs above the cornice line or uppermost portion of a facade wall, or where they will disfigure or conceal architectural details, window openings, doors, or other significant details.
- ii. Obstruction of historic features*—Avoid obscuring historic building features such as cornices, gables, porches, balconies, or other decorative elements with new signs.
- iii. Damage*—Avoid irreversible damage caused by installing a sign. For example, mount a sign to the mortar rather than the historic masonry.
- iv. Pedestrian orientation*—Orient signs toward the sidewalk to maintain the pedestrian oriented nature of the historic districts.

D. DESIGN

- i. Inappropriate materials*—Do not use plastic, fiberglass, highly reflective materials that will be difficult to read, or other synthetic materials not historically used in the district.

- ii. Appropriate materials*—Construct signs of durable materials used for signs during the period of the building's construction, such as wood, wrought iron, steel, aluminum, and metal grill work.
- iii. Color*—Limit the number of colors used on a sign to three. Select a dark background with light lettering to make signs more legible.
- iv. Typefaces*—Select letter styles and sizes that complement the overall character of the building façade. Avoid hard-to-read or overly intricate styles.

E. LIGHTING

- i. Lighting sources*—Use only indirect or bare-bulb sources that do not produce glare to illuminate signs. All illumination shall be steady and stationary. Internal illumination should not be used.
- ii. Neon lighting*—Incorporate neon lighting as an integral architectural element or artwork appropriate to the site, if used.

F. PROHIBITED SIGNS

i. An abbreviated list of the types of signs prohibited within San Antonio's historic districts and on historic landmarks is provided below. Refer to UDC Section 35- 612(j) and Chapter 28 of the Municipal Code for more detailed information on prohibited signs.

- Billboards, junior billboards, portable signs, and advertising benches.
- Pole signs.
- Revolving signs or signs with a kinetic component.
- Roof mounted signs, except in the case of a contributing sign.
- Digital and/or LED lighted signs, not to include LED light sources that do not meet the definition of a sign.
- Moored balloons or other floating signs that are tethered to the ground or to a structure.
- Any sign which does not identify a business or service within the historic district or historic landmark.
- Any non-contributing sign which is abandoned or damaged beyond 50 percent of its replacement value, including parts of old or unused signs.
- Notwithstanding the above, signs designated as a contributing sign or structure by the historic preservation officer shall not be prohibited unless or until such designation is revoked.

3. Projecting and Wall-Mounted Signs

A. GENERAL

- i. Mounting devices*—Construct sign frames and panels that will be used to be attach signs to the wall of a building of wood, metal, or other durable materials appropriate to the building's period of construction.
- ii. Structural supports*—Utilize sign hooks, expansion bolts, or through bolts with washers on the inside of the wall depending upon the weight and area of the sign, and the condition of the wall to which it is to be attached.
- iii. Appropriate usage*—Limit the use of projecting and wall-mounted signs to building forms that historically used these types of signs, most typically commercial storefronts. To a lesser degree, these signage types may also be appropriate in areas where residential building forms have been adapted for office or retail uses, if sized accordingly.

B. PROJECTING SIGNS

- i. Placement*—Mount projecting signs perpendicularly to a building or column while allowing eight feet of overhead clearance above public walkways.
- ii. Public right-of-way*—Limit the extension of projecting signs from the building facade into the public right-of-way for a maximum distance of eight feet or a distance equal to two-thirds the width of the abutting sidewalk, whichever distance is greater.
- iii. Area*—Projecting signs should be scaled appropriately in response to the building façade and number of tenants.

C. WALL-MOUNTED SIGNS

- i. Area*—Limit the aggregate area of all wall-mounted signs to twenty-five percent of a building facade.
- ii. Projection*—Limit the projection of wall-mounted signs to less than twelve inches from the building wall.
- iii. Placement*—Locate wall signs on existing signboards—the area above the storefront windows and below the second story windows—when available. Mount wall signs to align with others on the block if an existing signboard is not available.

iv. Channel letters—Avoid using internally-illuminated, wall-mounted channel letters for new signs unless historic precedent exists. Reverse channel letters may be permitted.

FINDINGS:

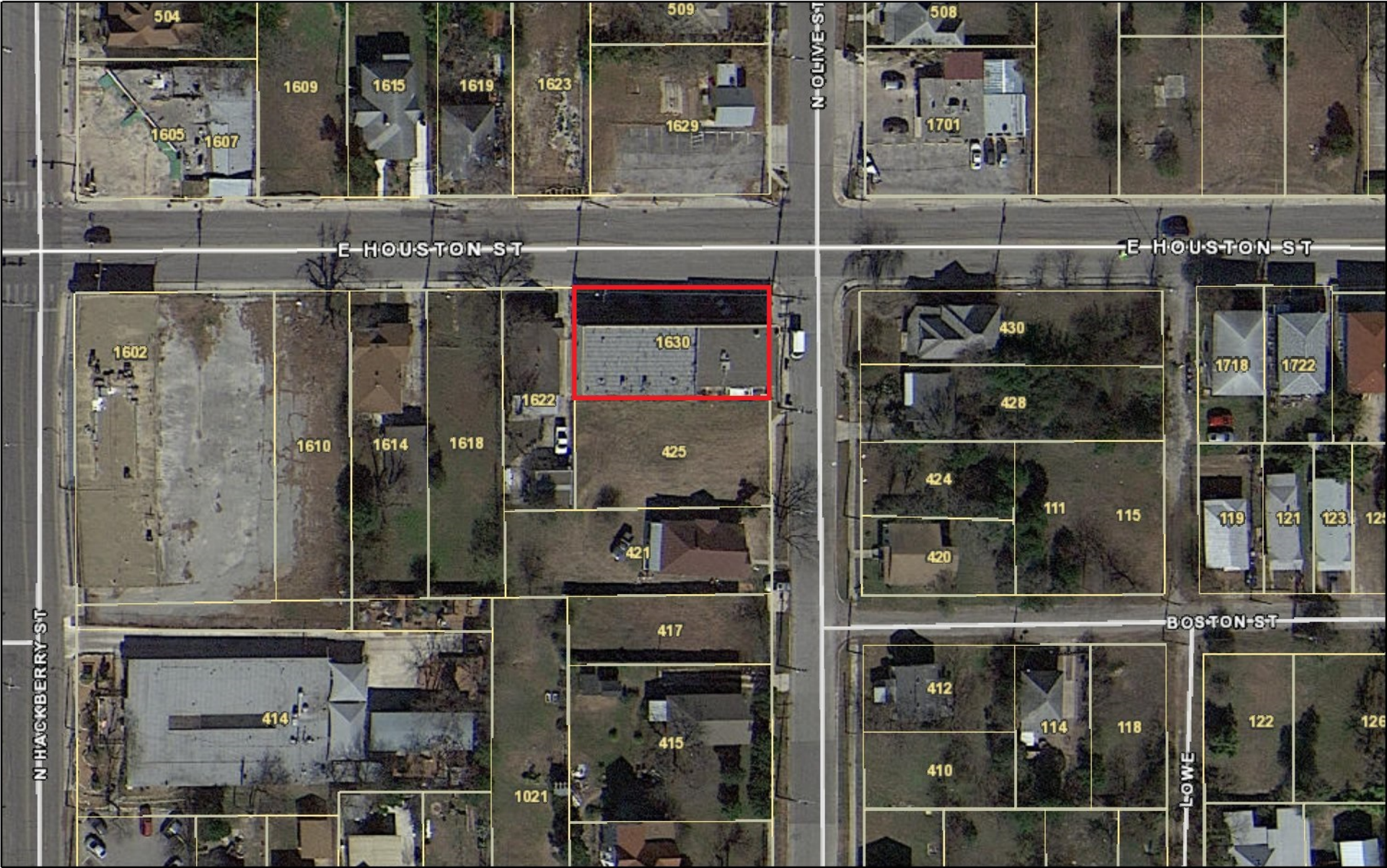
- a. The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install signage at 1630 E Houston Street, located within the Dignowity Hill Historic District. The proposed signage is to include an internally illuminated cabinet and internally illuminated channel letters. The temporary wall sign and window graphic currently located within the storefront system have not been approved and have not been requested as part of this application. Staff finds that this signage should be included in the request by the applicant, or removed.
- b. MASTER SIGNAGE PLAN – OHP staff recommends the development of a master signage plan to provide uniform signage for each tenant space at 1630 E Houston.
- c. ALLOWABLE SIGNAGE – The Historic Design Guidelines, Guidelines for Signage recommend no more than three signs per application (one major and two minor signs) to total no more than fifty (50) square feet.
- d. CABINET SIGN – The applicant has proposed to install an internally illuminated cabinet sign to feature a white, acrylic face. The proposed cabinet will feature an overall width of 8' – 0" and an overall height of 3' – 6", for a total size of approximately twenty-eight (28) square feet. Per the Guidelines for Signage, signage within historic districts should feature wood or metal construction and external illumination. The proposed cabinet is not consistent with the Guidelines.
- e. CHANNEL LETTERS – The applicant has proposed to install internally illuminated channel letters to read "Florist & Special Events". The applicant has noted that the proposed channel letter sign will total twenty-two (22) square feet in size. Per the Guidelines for Signage, signage within historic districts should feature wood or metal construction and external illumination. The proposed channel letters are not consistent with the Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION:

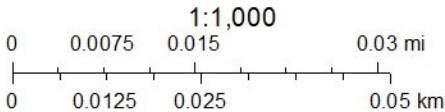
Staff does not recommend approval based on findings a through e. Staff recommends that the applicant propose signage that features metal construction, including metal faces and external illumination.

Additionally, staff recommends the development of a master signage plan for the property that would result in uniform signage for each tenant space. The temporary wall sign and window graphic currently located within the storefront system have not been approved and have not been requested as part of this application. Staff recommends that this signage be removed or applied for.

City of San Antonio One Stop



May 14, 2021





Before



1630 E Houston St,
San Antonio, TX 78202

After

This is channel letters
with one channel box oval

