

COA # 2010-COA-355 (SJ)	INDIANAPOLIS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT	Hearing Date OCT. 6, 2010
971 N. Delaware Street ST. JOSEPH		Continued from: <i>Sept. 1, 2010</i>
Applicant	MONIKA MUELLER FOR RE/MAX METRO	
mailing address:	1129 N Oxford Street Indianapolis, IN 46201	
Owner:	Jora Enterprises	
mailing address:	P.O. Box 1042 Indianapolis, IN 46206	
CASE		
IHPC COA:	2010-COA-355 (SJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retain abandoned pole sign. • Install new sign face and paint pole.
STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval		

STAFF COMMENTS

Background of the Property

This one-story office building was built c.1954 in the St. Joseph Historic District. The Federal Revival Style building is concrete block faced with brick and topped with a stepped terra cotta coping. It has original multi-lite windows and an existing entry door facing Delaware St. Along the south side of the building there are several multi-lite window openings facing Puryear Street. In front of the building is an existing pole sign structure that looks to have been erected at the time the building was built by the National Life and Accident Insurance Co. The pole sign sits up against the right-of-way next to the sidewalk. The company's slogan "we shield millions" was taken directly from the company's logo.



Retention of Pole Sign

The applicant is requesting to retain and reuse the existing abandoned pole sign structure and to install a new set of sign faces that identify the new business tenant. The applicant would like to paint the existing sign structure black and have the previously internally illuminated box re-lit. The proposed sign faces would have a light colored background with dark lettering.

Existing Sign Faces

The sign faces are a molded plastic type material in the shape of a shield attached around the perimeter with a number of screws through the surface. The sign faces look to most likely be original to the sign based on their custom shape. There are no externally visible evidence of ghosting on the surface which would indicate what the previous sign face design looked like. It is believed that any surface typeface that originally existed had been removed when the existing typeface for Hoosier Mailing Equipment was applied c.1989. Staff would suggest that this surface be reused because of the molded profile. If this molded plastic surface is original, it would be easily prone to cracking or breakage during removal and handling. Great care would need to be taken if it is removed from the frame for installation of a new sign face design since it is very fragile.

Internal Illumination

It is staff's belief that the original sign faces had a surface configuration similar to the logo. It is reasonable to assume that the sign was originally internally lit; however, the effect of the internally illumination would have been minimized if the sign face had a dark background like the logo. There is no direct evidence that this particular set of sign faces originally had a dark colored background with light lettering, but all of the logos developed for the company looked to have this configuration. Staff recommended that the applicant consider reversing the sign face to more closely resemble the potential original configuration of the insurance company's logo and to reduce the amount of light emitted from the surface. Staff is concerned that any newly lit sign faces would provide more 'glow' than was

originally intended. The applicant has chosen to leave the request as is and has received a letter of support for that request from the St. Joseph Neighborhood Association.

This building is near the edge of the existing commercial corridor running along Delaware Street. Directly across the street is a two-story house that was converted into the University Club of Indianapolis. To the south is an attorneys' office, to the immediate north is a large vacant lot. To the north on the other side of 10th Street is a two-story multi-family apartment building. Although this sign is small, being internally lit may have an impact on the nearby residential area and any future development on the adjacent vacant lot. In order to attempt to reduce the visual impact of an internally lit sign, staff suggests keeping the light level as low as possible and in keeping with the adjacent residential area to the north and east of the property.

Certificate of Authorization

The statute states that the commission "...shall issue a certificate of authorization... if the commission finds... [the requested action] to be inappropriate, but that its denial would result in substantial hardship or deprive the owner of all reasonable use and benefit of the subject property or that its effect upon the historic area would be insubstantial."

St. Joseph Preservation Plan

The St. Joseph Preservation Plan specifically recommends against internally illuminated signage being used throughout the historic district. The use of pole signs is also not recommended in the St. Joseph Historic District. The Sign Guidelines also recommend that 'lighting should be subtle and be compatible with the historic character of the district'.

Justification for Certificate of Authorization

After speaking with representatives from the Saint Joseph Neighborhood Association, staff believes that a Certificate of Authorization for this request is justified. The effect upon the historic area would be insubstantial for the following reasons:

1. The existing pole sign looks to have been built at the time the building was constructed as part of the overall image the insurance company was looking to portray.
2. The signs had existed in its current location for over 50 years.
3. Historically, the sign looks to have been internally lit.
4. There is no change to its size, materials or location relative to the building, the street, or the neighborhood.
1. The pole sign is within a CBD-2 zoning district which generally allows internally illuminated signs.
2. The sign is along a portion of a major thoroughfare that has a number of other lit signs and illuminated buildings to the south.
3. If the sign is internally illuminated, it would not directly affect any immediate residential area.
4. The overall height of the existing pole sign is approximately 17 feet tall. This is considerably smaller than the other pole signs along Delaware Street within two blocks of this building. This height gives the sign a more pedestrian scale that does not overwhelm the existing one-story commercial building.
5. The amount of light emitted from the sign could be limited to not provide an overly harsh level of lighting keeping it on a pedestrian level.

Staff believes the sign would be improved by adding a dark gray border around the perimeter of the sign face to help minimize the bright edge effect of the internal lighting, to relate back to the original insurance company design, and to balance the amount of contrast between the lettering and the background. At the time of this writing, staff was unable to reach the applicant to discuss this modification, but expects to have a response prior to the hearing.

STAFF RECOMMENDED MOTION

CASE #2010-COA-355 (SJ):

To approve a Certificate of Authorization to retain the abandoned pole sign, install a new sign face design and paint pole; per submitted documentation and subject to the following stipulations:

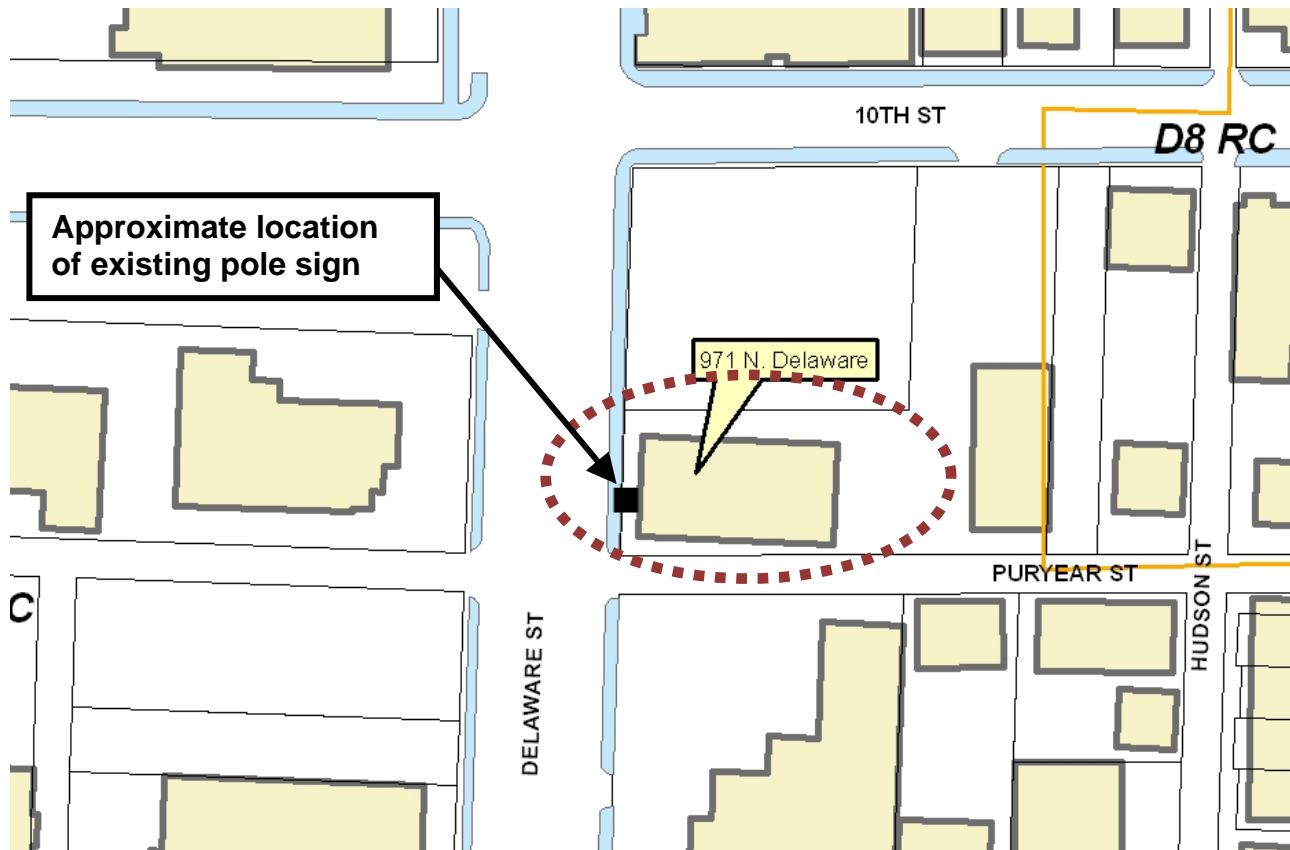
- 1. The final design of the new sign faces shall be approved by IHPC staff prior to installation.**

Approved: _____ Date: _____

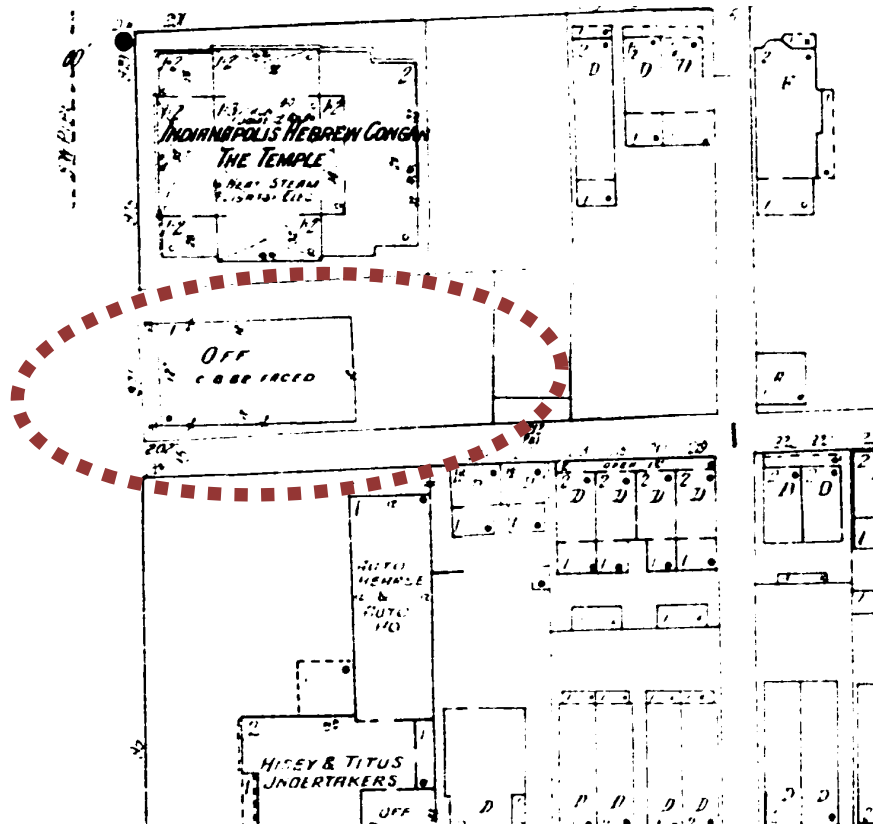
- 2. The existing molded sign faces shall be carefully removed and reused for the final sign face design. The existing typeface shall be carefully removed and new typeface shall be installed without damaging the existing surface.**

3. If damage occurs to the existing panels during installation and/or the panels are defaced, the panels shall be repaired or replaced within ten (10) business days of receiving notice of damage, vandalism, or disrepair. Any new panels shall be of durable quality and shall be molded to match the originals.
4. Final internal illumination shall be reviewed and approved by IHPC staff prior to installation. The least obtrusive lighting level shall be used. Overly harsh or bright lighting shall not be permitted. Approved: _____ Date: _____
5. Light bulbs used inside the pole sign shall be 'warm white' lamps or approved equal. Approved: _____ Date: _____
6. All replacement materials shall match the original materials for which they replace. All new materials shall have the same color, surface texture, and method of construction. Any deviation from this approach shall be approved by IHPC staff prior to construction.
7. Exposed wiring or conduit is not permitted.
8. Any changes to the design, placement, lighting, or other aspects of the signage plans must be approved by IHPC staff prior to commencing work and may require a new Certificate of Appropriateness.
9. Notify IHPC staff prior to making unexpected repairs.

Staff Reviewer: Ann Steadham



Map of subject property



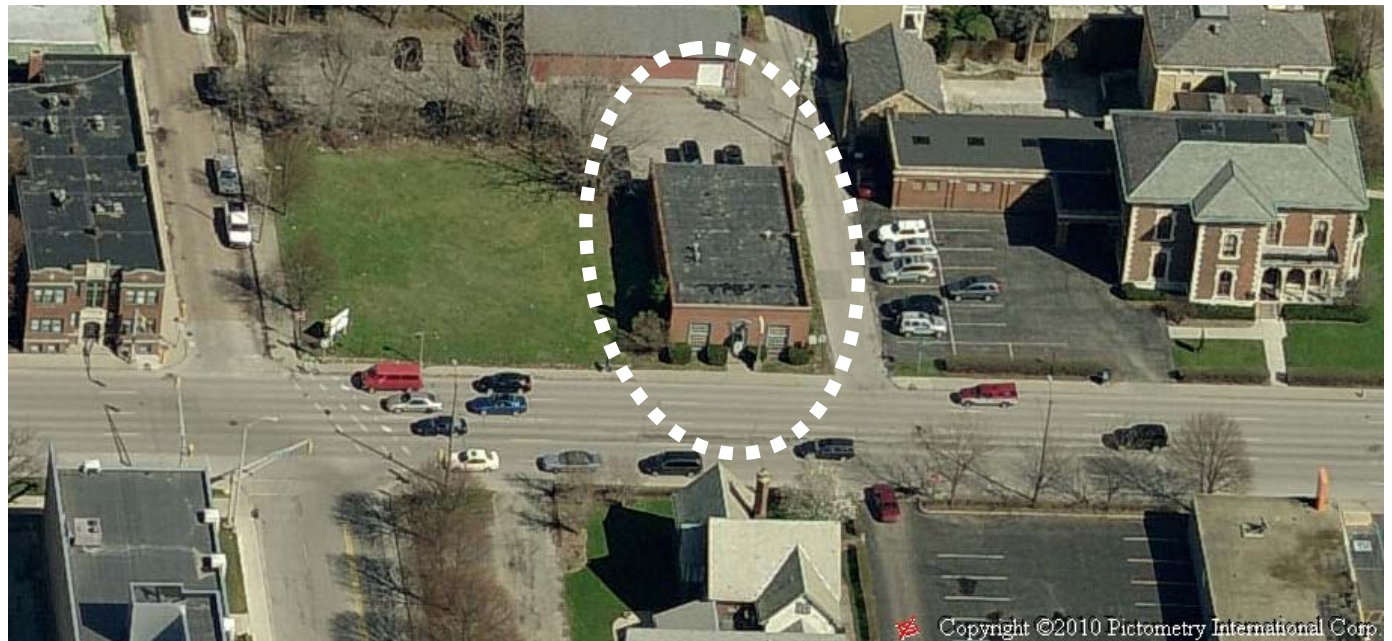
1956 Sanborn Map



Front of building seen from Delaware Street



View of building and pole sign looking north



View of building and pole sign looking east

Business logo



Existing pole sign

Proposed changes to pole sign

(Photos provided by Garry Chilluffo)



View looking south on Delaware St at night (photo provided by Garry Chilluffo)



View looking east at front of building at night (photo provided by Garry Chilluffo)

St. Joseph Historic Neighborhood Association
238 East St. Joseph Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-3311

September 25, 2010

Ann Steadham
Sr. Architectural Reviewer
Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission
1800 City County Building
200 East Washington Street
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

RE: 2010-COA-355 (SJ)
971 North Delaware Street
Indianapolis, Indiana

Ann,

After consideration of the above referenced application for the property located at 971 North Delaware Street within the St. Joseph Historic District, the St. Joseph Historic Neighborhood Association (SJHNA) would like to submit this letter of support for the proposed signage refurbishment. An informal review at the Board of Directors level and a presentation to the general membership, met with favorable review and consensus to support the application. The internal lighting of the sign was discussed and due to the fact the sign was historically backlit, and that external lighting might in fact be more obtrusive, the general membership felt the application was indeed appropriate.

The SJHNA would encourage IHPC to approve the signage as the applicant has demonstrated a concern for the neighborhood's input in a manner consistent with the intent of the neighborhood's Historic Plan.

Sincerely,

Dave Gibson
Board Member and Design and Beautification Chair
St. Joseph Historic Neighborhood Association

cc: David Bear – President, SJHNA
Garry Chilluffo – SJHNA
Monika Mueller - ReMax

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PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Letter of Support submitted by St. Joseph Neighborhood Association