



**SR-2 – ADVISORY STAFF REPORT (04-03-2026)**

*This advisory report, prepared by staff, represents the opinion and advice of professional staff, and does not represent nor direct the separate review and decision of the Historic District Commission. This report serves as an addendum to SR-1, an objective staff summary of the proposal and property.*

**ADDRESS:** 3500 MCDOUGALL

**MEETING DATE:** 04-03-2026

**APPLICATION NUMBER:** HDC2026-00054

**ADVISORY STAFF REPORT PREPARED BY:** E. THACKERY

**STAFF OBJECTIONS TO APPROVAL:**

*This first section describes itemized conclusions/concerns, which, in staff's professional opinion, would prevent the issue of an unconditional Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). "None" means staff has no objections and believes a COA is warranted, with no conditions. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.*

1. None.

**STAFF ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION:**

*This second section expands on the reasoning and analysis leading to staff's conclusions given in the first section above. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or recommendations.*

- This single-resource historic district was designated in 2018.
- This review has two parts: signage and lighting.
- **SIGN:** Staff could not find approval for an illuminated, projecting sign on this building, but one is evident on Google Street View from at least 2009 through August 2015. (Accela shows a sign permit issued in 2004, but the record on file does not give detailed information.)
- By July 2017, according to Google Street View, the projecting sign had been removed.



*The nonhistoric, illuminated sign was visible at 3500 McDougall in June 2009. (Google Street View)*



*The illuminated sign was still present in August 2015. (Google Street View)*



*By July 2017, the sign had been removed. (Google Street View) The following year, the local historic district was established.*

- In summary, the sign was not present at the time of designation in 2018, but a nonhistoric, illuminated sign existed on the building from at least 2009 through 2015.
- In March 2025, the HDC reviewed and approved an application for two flat, wall signs at this building, but it was noted during the commissioner discussion that the staff report noted that “a non-historic age blade sign which existed at the building’s northwest corner...was removed sometime between 2015 and 2017, prior to the building’s designation.”
- During the discussion at the meeting, the Commissioners noted that a projecting sign may be appropriate at this unique intersection, but they issued the Certificate of Appropriateness for the flat signs being proposed and the architect planned to discuss the possibility with the building owners of a blade sign on the building instead.
- Between March 2025 and March 2026, the building owners installed the projecting sign without seeking amended approval. As a result, the CoA for the already-installed sign is being requested with this application.



*The installed sign, March 2026.*

- The Sign and Awning Guidelines (approved in 2008 and revised in 2010 and 2013) state that:
  - signs should be located where architectural features or details suggest a location, size, or shape for the sign,
  - the number of projecting signs should be limited, and that
  - external or halo lighting should be used when illumination is necessary.
- In April 2023, the Commission approved a revision to the Guidelines that stated that internally illuminated signs must contain a dark/opaque background that remains opaque at night to minimize the glaring white box effect that often results when transparent light-colored plastic is used for sign backgrounds.
- Staff finds that the Prince Hall Lodge at 3500 McDougall does not have features or details that suggest a good location for a sign. On the Gratiot façade, the storefronts on the first floor would likely have signboard locations if they had display windows (instead of the glass blocks currently installed). Those signs, however, would be for the retailers themselves, and not for the Lodge. The McDougall façade’s first floor lacks storefronts and has architectural features, like a cornice just above the first floor, that would not accommodate signage. The district’s sign guidelines call for a limited use of projecting signs, but staff finds that this building’s architectural features make a projecting sign a good option in this case.
- Staff finds that the proposed/installed sign meets the sign guidelines in that the sign’s shape, size, and placement are appropriate for this building.
- Staff finds that the sign does not follow the sign guidelines in illumination type (internal instead of external) and in color selection for the background of the sign (white).
  - The installed sign is illuminated internally, instead of externally as the sign guidelines recommend.
  - The sign has a white plastic background, which the 2023 revision to the sign guidelines discourages.
- The installed sign is, however, similar to the nonhistoric sign that had been on site before July 2017, before the district was established. Additionally, staff notes that since the surrounding area is not a local historic district, other internally illuminated signs are nearby, and staff notes that the sign’s white area is not so large that it will create a wash of bright light around it or below it.
- As mentioned, the former sign was white with blue. Staff notes that the district’s Elements of Design, Element 9, mentions that the building had, at the time of designation, royal blue accents on doors and window panels. These are no longer present.
- **LIGHTING:** The Commission has given staff authority to approve exterior light fixtures. By the separate Security Lighting and Cameras guidelines, new security equipment shall be minimally visible from the public right-of-way. New “equipment shall not be installed on a building’s primary façade. Rather, it shall be installed ...on a secondary façade/wall, or within the site/yard in a manner that will not call undue attention to itself or detract from significant architectural or landscape features.”
- Staff finds the cylindrical fixture proposed for the right of the McDougall entrance in bronze to be an appropriate color for the mostly buff-colored building, and the 34” length to be an appropriate size. The fixture’s design appears modern and differentiated, while the size and finish are compatible, meeting the Standards, in staff’s opinion.



*Cylindrical light proposed for the right of the McDougall entrance (from applicant's materials).*

- Staff finds the above-door security lights (proposed to be installed above the Preston entrance and above the doors on the rear of the building) to be an unobtrusive design that does not call attention to itself or obscure architectural features, as the guidelines recommend, especially since the light is cast down, instead of out, and the fixtures will be on secondary facades. The color of the fixture is not specified in the product materials, but the architect confirmed by email 3/31 that the proposed fixtures would be Dark Bronze. It is staff's opinion that that color complements the building.



*The above-door fixture proposed on the Preston side and the rear of the building.*

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

*This third and final section takes staff's itemized "objections" identified in the first section, and presents them in the form of "conditions" in support of a proposed approval recommendation or "reasons" in support of a proposed denial recommendation, in the form required by Section 21-2-78 of the City Code. The Historic District Commission is not required to accept staff opinions or*

*recommendations.*

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

**Recommendation 1 of 1, Certificate of Appropriateness**

Staff recommends that the proposed work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge Historic District's Elements of Design.