STAFF REPORT
APRIL 12, 2023 HRC MEETING

Case #: COA2023-026
Staff: Michelle M. McCullough
Applicant: Simon Burgess

LOCATION
District: N/A
Street: 633 North Liberty Street, Winston-Salem
Building: Twin City Motor Company Building
Status: N/A
Local Historic Landmark#: 142

REQUEST(S)
• Installation of signage

APPLICABLE DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS
Forsyth County Design Review Standards for Local Historic Landmarks available at

STAFF COMMENTS
The applicant proposes to replace the existing signage that includes two cabinet style signs that are attached to the building, one over the entrance on the northwest elevation and one over the entrance on the west elevation. The existing signs were installed prior to the landmark designation and are not compatible with the landmark building in terms of style, time period, materials, and design. The Commission is required to first make a finding that this application is a substantial change from the denied COA2022-029.

STAFF FINDINGS
Commission staff finds that the application is a substantial change from COA2022-029 because the design of the sign is projecting, an appropriate style, and new information about the material has been discovered. The use of acrylic was a material utilized in the 1930s for commercial buildings.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission consider application number COA2023-2026.

STAFF FINDINGS
Commission staff finds that the project is not incongruous with the character of the Landmark because:

1) The applicant proposes to replace two existing panel signs that are in metal, backlit, sign cabinets installed against the building with two new projecting style signs. The existing signs were installed prior to the landmark designation and are not compatible with the landmark building in terms of style, time period, and design and covered historical material in highly visible locations. Each proposed new sign will be a 48” x 72.25” projecting box. The frame will be constructed of painted aluminum and each box will have two acrylic panels covered with film that displays the colored logos of the businesses. The Twin City Motor Company Building was constructed in 1926 and the proposed projecting signage is a style that is compatible with and has been used on the landmark
The proposed signage will allow for more historic material to be visible. Acrylic was discovered in the 1930s and quickly became the most popular option for indoor and outdoor signage. It is much stronger than glass and wood and is resistant to scratching and foul weather. Therefore, the proposed projecting style signs are more compatible with the building in term of style, time period, materials, design, scale, and color. (Signage, Landmark Standards 5 and 6)

2) The proposed signage is limited to two projecting signs, one over the entrance on the northwest elevation and one over the entrance on the west elevation. The signage is removable. (Signage, Landmark Standards 4 and 7)

3) The proposed signs will be internally backlit, which typically is not compatible with landmark buildings and sites. However, the proposed style, projecting signage, will emulate an appropriate style of lighted sign of the 1920s for a commercial building. Historically, lighted signage goes back to the 1850s, the first gas illuminated sign was in Chicago for the P.T. Barnum Museum. In the 1880s, incandescent bulbs were created. The first display was at the International Electrical Exposition, with a sign that said “EDISON”. By 1910 most major US cities’ commercial districts were being lit up building by building with incandescent bulbs and in the 1920s by neon tubes. Fluorescent tubes came in by the 1930s. The proposed signage is compatible with the historic character of this landmark building and it will not diminish or compromise the historic character of the landmark building. (Signage, Landmark Standards 4 and 7 and Exterior Lighting Standard 6)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission approve COA2023-026 at the Twin City Motor Company Building, Local Historic Landmark #142, located at 633 North Liberty Street, Winston-Salem (PIN 6835-28-2505) with the following conditions:

1) The signage should be attached in mortar joints and not directly into the white, glazed, terra-cotta;

2) The applicant shall receive, prior to commencement of the work, all other required permits or permissions from governmental agencies;

3) Commission staff shall review and approve any revisions or deviations to any portion of the as-submitted work, that qualifies as a minor work, prior to commencement of that portion of the project; and

4) The applicant shall submit the Certificate of Appropriateness Request for Certification of Completed Work form and photo documentation of the completed project to HRC staff within ten (10) days of its completion.