



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the December 2, 2020 DRB Meeting

Signage

Case # 20-74R1: Morgan & Morgan
80 Monroe Ave
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Brian Nason
Morgan & Morgan
1 Commerce Sq 26th Floor
Memphis, TN 38103

Property Owner: Olymbec USA LLC
1004 Brooks Rd
Memphis, TN 38116

Background: This application is for a pair of projecting signs at 80 Monroe Ave, also known as Brinkley Plaza. Although signs in the CBID are typically approved by staff administratively, this sign cannot receive administrative approval due to attributes that do not conform to the requirements of the Downtown Sign Code.

The DRB initially reviewed this sign proposal at its October 7, 2020 meeting. The board did not approve the proposal, due to concerns about the sign's design. Following the board's initial judgment, the applicant has significantly revised the design of the sign, and is re-submitting it for board approval.

Project Description: The location and sign type of the proposed signs have remained the same since the original application. The proposed signs are two 16 ft. (h) by 3 ft. (w) double-sided projecting signs mounted on the brick above the building's first floor. One will be located on the building's Main Street façade, while the other will be located on the Monroe side of the building. Outside of these basic characteristics, the design has been significantly revised.

The original sign was composed of a black aluminum cabinet, with yellow acrylic letters reading "Morgan & Morgan" pushed through. The revised sign faces will be composed of light stainless steel panels with raised black letters reading "Morgan & Morgan." The letters will be back-lit, providing a "halo" lighting effect when

illuminated. A recessed cabinet faced with illuminated yellow surfaces will be sandwiched in between the opaque faces, adding additional lighting and visual interest. The total depth of the signs, including the raised lettering, will be reduced to 13 in., compared to the 18 in. of the original proposal. The signs will be mounted using dark metal wall brackets which will match the color of the adjacent window frames.

Staff Report:

As in the original sign application (#20-74), there are two sign code requirements that the proposed sign does not meet: the location of the sign (above the second floor windows on the Main Street Mall), and the lack of street frontage for the signed business. Likewise, staff's original recommendation remains: to allow the signage, but to count it as filling the primary sign allotment for the building itself.

Board members expressed concerns about the design of the sign as originally presented at the October 2020 DRB meeting. The board was particularly concerned over whether the design of the sign harmonized with the design of the subject building, which is one of Main Street's most iconic historic structures. In revising the sign, the applicant has thoughtfully chosen colors and materials designed specifically to work with the building, rather than clashing with it. Staff believes that the revision successfully addresses the original concerns of the board.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the proposed signs, with the condition that the property owner agrees that with the addition of these signs, 80 Monroe / Brinkley Plaza has reached its allotment of primary signs, and will not install additional primary signs denoting the building, its management, or additional upper-floor tenants.