



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION Proceedings

**April 5, 2021
4:00 p.m.**

(Zoom Webinar and viewable on City of Greeley YouTube)

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair DePetro called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Commissioners Azari, McLean, Podell and Sattler were present. (Chair Brunswig was absent and there is one vacancy.)

II. Approval of Minutes for the meeting held on March 1, 2021

Commissioner Podell moved to approve the minutes dated March 1, 2021. Commissioner Azari seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0. (Chair Brunswig was absent and there is one vacancy.)

III. Public Input

Linde Thompson addressed the Commission on behalf of Historic Greeley Inc. and provided an update on rehabilitation of the Bessie Smith House for Family of Christ Presbyterian Church. Ms. Thompson advised that the exterior was painted last fall and reconstruction of the porch is underway. She added that the interior structural framing, walls and insulation are complete and sheetrock is being installed. Ms. Thompson also reported that permanent electrical service is going in this week and that an elevator lift will be installed within the next couple of weeks. She indicated that Historic Greeley Inc. is looking forward to resuming in-person meetings and that, with the advent of warmer weather and increasing numbers of COVID vaccinations, anticipates meeting in person later in April and will consider whether to do any activity or event for Historic Preservation Month in May.

IV. Public hearing to consider Certificate of Designation

Case Number: GHR2021-0001
 Applicant: Raj Sharma, on behalf of owner 915 919 919½ 921 16th Street LLC
 Project Name: Color Portraits Sign Greeley Historic Register Nomination
 Project Address: 915-21 16th Street
 Case Planner: Elizabeth Kellums, Planner III – Historic Preservation

Vice Chair DePetro introduced the case and asked whether there were any conflicts of interest by Commission members. There being none, Ms. Kellums addressed the Commission and presented the staff report.

Ms. Kellums introduced the item as the designation of the Color Portraits Sign on the Greeley Historic Register. She presented a site map showing the location of the property. Ms. Kellums described three areas of significance considered for historic designations, including historical, architectural and geographical, as well as integrity criteria. She advised that a property must meet at least one criterion in one area of significance as well as retain sufficient integrity to convey that significance.

Ms. Kellums presented a history of the sign that was constructed in 1943 by Ray Moore Sign Service and delivered to Nash Studio. The building was occupied in 1935 by Martin Studio and owned and operated by Robert Eldon Martin and his wife and business partner, Charlotte Bethel Martin. Robert Martin was an Army camp photographer at Camp Roberts in California in 1943-44 and his wife ran the business. In 1943, Nash Studio occupied the building and the photography business was owned and operated by Hugh Nash, who was also an Army photographer at Camp Roberts, and his wife, Hulda, a professional photo re-toucher. Hugh was active in community as a photographer. As a point of interest, Ms. Kellums noted a newspaper article describing Hugh Nash speaking to the Greeley city council on behalf of a group of local photographers about the need to regulate the activities of all photographers and calling out the unethical practices of traveling photographers. She added that the Color Portrait Sign has character, interest and integrity that reflects the heritage and cultural development of Greeley in the 1940s and modernization of the World War II era and development along 16th Street. Ms. Kellums thanked the museum staff for their research and presented an undated photograph of the lit up sign when neon was still functional. She presented a current photograph that includes the holes that housed the neon tubing, and noted that the sign remains in its original location.

Ms. Kellums described the sign as a mid-20th century, steel, rooftop, commercial neon sign that became popular in the early 1920s and hit the height of popularity in the 1940s. Following a decline, this sign style regained popularity in the 1970s. Ms. Kellums reported that the colors on the sign are the original colors.

The sign is located near several designated properties that include the Monroe Avenue Historic District, Campus Pharmacy Building and several houses on 9th Avenue that are individually designated. It is also significant in that it is located across from the University of Northern Colorado campus and is a visual, well-known landmark associated with the commercial development of the 16th Street corridor.

Ms. Kellums described the designation criteria and provided examples of how the sign meets specific criteria. She noted that the sign gained historical significance as it was associated with Nash Studio from 1943 until it closed in 1973, adding that it is architecturally significant as a mid-century commercial neon sign and geographically significant due to its placement and location.

Ms. Kellums also described seven aspects of integrity established by the National Parks Service, including location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. She added that, while the sign lacks the glass tubing and neon gas and has lost some integrity, it conveys significance since it retains the paint and holes from the glass tubing and is still in its original location.

Notice was published in the Greeley Tribune two weeks prior to the hearing on March 21 and 28 and a sign was posted at the site. The applicant received notice of the designation hearing by letter dated March 1. Staff recommends that the Color Portraits Sign at 915-21 16th Street meets criteria for historical, architectural and geographical significance and integrity criteria in Section 18.36.060 of the Greeley Municipal Code (to be revised and recodified to Section 24-947 in May 2021).

Upon question by Commissioner Azari, Ms. Kellums reported that the sign remains in good condition. Commissioner Sattler asked whether the owner intends to eventually restore the neon lights or modify the sign so that neon lights could be added in the future. Ms. Kellums reported that she had not received official word, adding that the applicant is working with Historic Greeley Inc. who has been doing some research and deferred to the applicant to respond.

The applicant, Raj Sharma, addressed the Commission and thanked Ms. Kellums and Historic Greeley Inc. for their assistance. He stated that Ms. Thompson might have information about the best option to restore the sign as well as available grants and other funding. Linde Thompson advised that designation of the sign would open doors for resources toward rehabilitation of the sign. She added that she has talked with some commercial sign contractors who are waiting on the historical photograph that the museum provided.

Vice Chair DePetro observed that it would be great if the sign could be restored to illuminate all night along the 16th Street corridor. Commissioner Podell asked about the potential impact to buildings with a historic sign mounted to the top and asked whether there were limitations placed upon owners as far as interior or exterior building renovations. Ms. Kellums advised that the buildings are not affected as the designation only pertains to the sign, adding that designations have legal descriptions that remain with the property. She stated that the designation certificate would indicate that only the sign is designated on the Register, adding that if the sign were to be removed, the issue would be revisited at that time.

Commissioner Azari asked whether the building owner is responsible for taking care of the sign and the expectation for any potential future owner to maintain the sign. Ms. Kellums advised that to the extent the designation continues, so does an owner's obligation to care for the sign. She added that the designation certificate is recorded with the legal description that should appear on any title work to advise future owners that they are purchasing a designated property with an expectation that it must be maintained.

Upon question by Commissioner McLean, Ms. Thompson reported that the sign is attached to the roof. She added that the sign is firmly secured by supports and was not disturbed when the building was re-roofed in the 1980s.

Vice Chair DePetro opened the public hearing at 4:32 p.m. The clerk read a comment from Louisa Andersen into the record. The public hearing was closed at 4:33 p.m.

Commissioner McLean moved that, based on the application received and the preceding analysis, the Commission finds and concludes that the Color Portraits Sign at 915-21 16th Street meets significance criteria of Section 18.36.060(a) [to be recodified as Section 24-947] and integrity criteria of Section 18.36.060(d) [to be recodified as Section 24-947] of the Greeley Municipal Code, as summarized below, and therefore approve the designation.

(1) Historical Significance:

- a. *The property has character, interest and integrity and reflects the heritage and cultural development of the City, State or Nation.*

The Color Portraits Sign has character, interest and integrity and reflects the heritage and cultural development of Greeley. The sign reflects the commercial development in the 16th Street corridor.

(2) Architectural Significance:

- a. *Characterizes an architectural style associated with a particular era and/or ethnic group.*
- d. *Has a strong or unique relationship to other areas potentially eligible for preservation because of architectural significance.*
- e. *Has visual symbolic meaning or appeal for the community.*

The sign represents mid-20th century commercial neon sign architecture and is associated with the 16th Street corridor development.

(3) Geographical Significance:

- a. *The property has proximity to a square, park or unique area deserving of preservation.*
- b. *Is a visual feature identifying an area or neighborhood or consists of utilitarian and commercial structures historically and geographically associated with an area.*

The sign is significant for its location on the 16th Street corridor, across from the college and in close proximity to Greeley Historic Register-designated Monroe Avenue Historic District and Campus Pharmacy Building, an area significant for reflecting the mid-20th century commercial development of Greeley.

Commissioner Azari seconded the motion. The motion carried 5-0. (Chair Brunswig was absent and there is one vacancy.)

V. Historic Preservation Month Discussion

Ms. Kellums advised that May is Historic Preservation Month and that there is currently no in-person event planned due to COVID-19. She has prepared a proclamation that will be presented and read at City Council's first meeting in May. She asked Commissioners to provide any ideas of ways to celebrate. Commissioner Azari expressed appreciation for the Windows of Time videos and stated that it might be nice to make them available to the community. Ms. Kellums advised that some of the videos are available on the City's YouTube channel on the "Windows of Time" playlist. Commissioners suggested involving the media to relay the information to the public as well as resources such as the library and social media.

VII. Commission Member Reports

Commissioner McLean expressed his thanks to everyone for allowing him to serve on the Commission for the past 2½ years and advised that he is moving to Oregon on April 20 to reside near family. He added that his role on the Commission provided an opportunity to work on the William Bowman Project that he presented two years ago. Commissioners thanked Mr. McLean for his service and Commissioner Sattler expressed gratitude for his knowledge, expertise and input. Commissioner McLean added that he plans to return to Colorado to present an expanded version of the William Bowman presentation at the CPI Saving Places conference when in-person learning opportunities return.

VIII. Staff Report

Ms. Kellums advised that recodification of the Greeley Municipal Code is scheduled for approval by City Council on April 6 and will take effect in May. She noted that there are two vacancies on the Commission and that there are no applicants to date.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

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Christen DePetro

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Christen DePetro, Vice Chair

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Elizabeth Kellums

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Elizabeth Kellums, Secretary