Staff Report

Downtown Design Review

File Number: 1-B-26-DT

Meeting: 1/21/2026

Applicant: Baker Jones Signco Inc.

Owner: MT Land Company, LLC

Project: Woodruff's Building

Property Information

Location: 424 S. Gay St. **Parcel ID:** 95 I A 033

Zoning: DK-H (Downtown Knoxville, Historic Subdistrict)

Description:

W. W. Woodruff Hardware Co. Building (1905). Five-story, Classical Revival brick structure featuring flat roof with bracketed cornice. Two bays of windows, including arched windows on the fifth floor, separated by Ionic pilasters. Ground-floor storefront has been altered in the past.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of Certificate 1-B-26-DT, subject to the following condition.
1) Sign to be placed centrally, maintaining equal distance from both sides of the sign board.

Description of Work

Level I - Board Review

Sign

Removal of the existing wall sign and installation of a new wall sign measuring 23' wide by 3' tall (69 sq ft), featuring reverse (halo-lit) channel letters. The black, aluminum channel letters with 3" returns will be mounted on a 1.5" deep backer panel with a 2" standoff and reverse-lit using white LED strip lighting. The backer panel will be painted to match the building's exterior paint and attached to the sign board using 3/8" by 4" anchors at 30" intervals. The sign will be placed 14'-2" above ground level.

Comments

The Design Review Board approved a reverse-lit wall sign for Woodruff’s building in October 2025 (10-B-25-DT). The applicant now proposes to include a backer panel for the channel letters, which would reduce the number of wall penetrations.

The Woodruff’s building is a contributing structure to the Gay Street Commercial Historic District, so the Historic Resources section of the guidelines applies. The proposed 69-sq-ft sign is "below second-story windows on the sign board" and “proportional to the building where it will be installed,” consistent with the guidelines.

The guidelines discourage internally illuminated signs. However, the Board has approved such signs on a case-by-case basis. Furthermore, although the LED lighting strips are installed within the framework of the channel letters,

halo illumination may be considered as a form of external illumination because the light source does not shine through the sign face. The lighting is directed in a way that creates silhouettes of the letters placed in front of the light.

Applicable Design Guidelines

Downtown Design Guidelines

C. Historic Resources
7. Recommended Signs
7a. Locate signs above storefront windows, below second-story windows on the sign board, or on the storefront windows themselves (30% is maximum coverage), or off the front of the building as a projecting sign (maximum size: 9 square feet).
7b. Create signs that are proportional to the building where they are located.
7c. Do not light signs internally.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

1-B-26-DT

APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

424 S. Gay St.

Level 1: Minor alteration of an existing building/ structure

Original Print Date: 1/5/2026 Revised:

Knoxville/Knox County Planning · Design Review Board

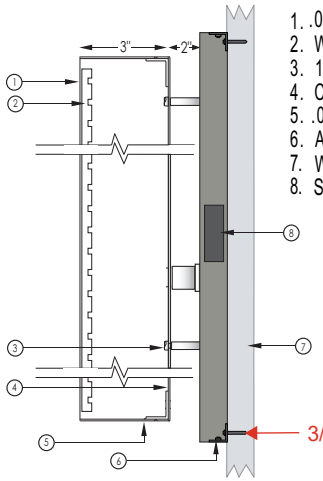
Petitioner: Baker Jones Signco Inc.

N

0 160

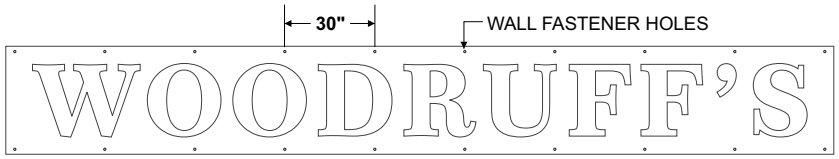
Feet

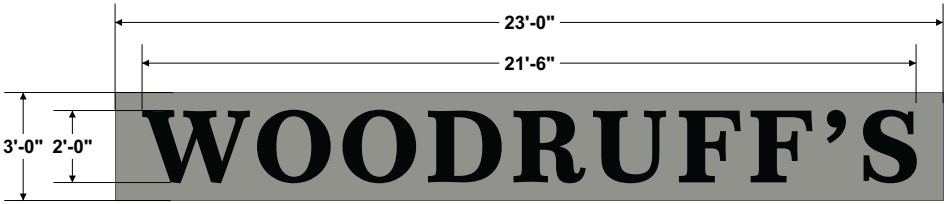
REVERSE CHANNEL LETTERS ON BACKER PANEL
LED ILLUMINATION



1. .080 ALUMINUM FACE
2. WHITE LED STRIP LIGHTING
3. 1/4" ALUMINUM SPACERS
4. CLEAR LEXAN BACK
5. .063 ALUMINUM SIDEWALLS
6. ANGLE IRON (MOUNT) WITH STUDS
7. WALL
8. SELF CONTAINED POWER SUPPLY

UL LISTED





LETTERS TO BE CENTERED ON BACKER PANEL

NIGHT VIEW

Black

SIGNCO inc.
PLASTIC.NEON.ELECTRONIC

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VALUE OF THIS DRAWING: $500.00

SIGN & FAX BACK SO THAT WE MAY APPROVE YOUR ORDER.

FAX: 865.947.2089 info@signco-inc.com

☐ APPROVED
☐ APPROVED W/CHANGES
☐ REVISE & RESUBMIT

APPROVAL SIGNATURE

FILE LOCATION: Baker/W/Woodruffs	SALES REPRESENTATIVE: Baker Jones	DATE: 01-07-2026	SCALE: 3/16" = 1'
LOCATION: Knoxville, TN	FILE: Woodruffs Bldg Downtown	DRAWN BY: Tiffany Poling	