



## Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: July 9, 2020

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| <b>PROJECT</b><br><b>Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden</b><br><b>Revised Museum Entrance Sign</b><br>700 Independence Avenue, SW<br>Washington, DC | <b>NCPC FILE NUMBER</b><br>7940   |
| <b>SUBMITTED BY</b><br>Smithsonian Institution   | <b>NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER</b><br>1.71(38.00)45148                                   |
| <b>REVIEW AUTHORITY</b><br>Federal Projects in the District<br>per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)  | <b>APPLICANT'S REQUEST</b><br>Approval of preliminary and final<br>building plans |
|  | <b>PROPOSED ACTION</b><br>Approve preliminary and final<br>building plans         |
|  | <b>ACTION ITEM TYPE</b><br>Consent Calendar                                       |

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### PROJECT SUMMARY

The Smithsonian Institution is requesting preliminary and final approval of a redesigned sign for its southeastern Hirshhorn Museum entrance. NCPC previously approved a design for the entrance sign at its meeting in January 2018; however, the sign was never installed. Since then, the Smithsonian has developed a new design to be more compatible with the iconic appearance of its Hirshhorn Museum building. The revised design changes the material of the sign to bronze and reduces the height, width, and depth of the individual letters from the previous design.

### KEY INFORMATION

- Located on the National Mall, in Washington, DC, the Hirshhorn is a Modernist building designed by Gordon Bunshaft of Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill architects, and constructed between 1969 and 1974.
  - The Hirshhorn is a contributing building to the National Mall Historic District and was determined to be individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in May 2016.
  - The new door sign is intended to be more consistent with the look of the Hirshhorn building design, reflective of the bronze revolving door enclosure (located beneath the sign), lobby accents, and building curvature.
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## RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

**Approves** the Smithsonian Institution's proposed revised exterior permanent entry sign over the southeast revolving door entrance at the Hirshhorn Museum.

## PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

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| <b>Previous actions</b>                   | <b>January 2018</b> – Preliminary / final approval of previous door entry sign. |
| <b>Remaining actions</b><br>(anticipated) | <b>None.</b>  |

## PROJECT ANALYSIS

Staff has evaluated the preliminary and final building plans for the new redesigned permanent exterior sign at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, determining its consistency with the relevant policies within the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. Staff finds the project to be consistent with policies in the Federal Elements in the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* and would improve the visitor experience to the Hirshhorn Museum. The new sign would consist of lettering aligned in a circumlinear configuration (reflective of the round building design), with a bronze finish to reflect the bordering of the revolving door enclosure below. Staff concurs with the intent of the project as more consistent with the look of the building. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission approve the Smithsonian Institution's proposed new revised exterior permanent entry sign over the southeast revolving door entrance at the Hirshhorn Museum.**

### Analysis

The previously-approved (January 2018) entry sign consisted of white, powder-coated aluminum letters (with no internal lighting) that spell out "HIRSHHORN" in a circumlinear alignment atop of the primary revolving door entrance in the southeast façade of the Museum building. Each letter measured 18-inches high and 6-inches deep. The new proposed replacement sign would consist of lettering aligned in the same circumlinear configuration (reflective of the round building design), with a bronze finish (to reflect the bordering of the revolving door enclosure below), and letters measuring 15-inches high and 4-inches deep. The redesigned sign would also spell out "HIRSHHORN", with no internal lighting. The sign lettering would be affixed to a 1/8-inch thick steel base on top of the door housing, each letter with two 1/4-inch steel mounting rods welded to base plate and mechanically fastened to letter backs.

The door sign would mark the primary public entrance to the building lobby on the southeast façade. The entry accesses a glazed lobby spanning the southwest and southeast piers of the

building. The south lobby wall features two sets of original revolving bronze and glass doors, each within a cylindrical drum clad in bronze; however, only the southern door is currently operational. The new lettering is proposed as a more consistent design with the look of the historic museum building (with bronze and brass furniture and accents found within the lobby), and NCPC staff concurs with this assessment

## **CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE**

### **Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital**

The proposed new sign for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is consistent with policies in the Federal Elements of the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*, in particular under the Historic Preservation Elements, policies HP.B.1, HP.C.1 and HP.C.6, and under Visitors and Commemoration Elements, policies VC.B.8 and VC.C.2.

### **National Historic Preservation Act**

Regarding Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), both the Smithsonian Institution (SI) and NCPC have compliance responsibilities, as NCPC has approval authority. The SI initiated consultation with the DC State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and both SI and NCPC made the determination that the proposed new sign at the Hirshhorn Museum would not lead to an adverse effect on historic properties. The DC SHPO concurred with this determination of no adverse effect on historic properties.

### **National Environmental Policy Act**

The Smithsonian Institution does not have an independent responsibility to fulfill the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as it is not considered a federal agency for purposes of NEPA. However, NCPC does have an independent NEPA responsibility as a result of its approval authority over the project. NCPC staff has independently reviewed the project information and determined that the project meets NCPC's Categorical Exclusion (3): Approval of the installation or restoration of minor building elements, such as, but not limited to windows, doors, roofs, building signs, and rooftop equipment and green roofs. Prior to applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances were present as required by the Commission's NEPA procedures.

## **CONSULTATION**

### **Coordinating Committee**

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the preliminary and final building plans for the new sign at its June 17, 2020 meeting. Without objection, the Committee forwarded the proposed preliminary and final building plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has

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been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC; District Department of Transportation; District of Columbia Office of Planning; District Department of Energy and Environment (via e-mail); District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (via e-mail); General Services Administration; National Park Service; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

### **U.S. Commission of Fine Arts**

The project was reviewed by the Commission of Fine Arts at its meeting on June 18, 2020, with no objection to the revised final design for a new building identification sign, featuring the bronze-colored letters, above the southeast revolving door entrance to the Hirshhorn Museum, as shown in materials received and dated 4 June 2020.

### **ONLINE REFERENCE**

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- NCPC Staff Summary Presentation

Prepared by M. Weil  
06/22/2020

### **POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)**

# Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden Revised Revolving Door Sign

700 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Building Plans

Smithsonian Institution

# Project Summary



**Commission Meeting Date:** July 9, 2020

**NCPC Review Authority:** 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

**Applicant Request:** Approval of preliminary and final building plans

**Session:** Consent Calendar

**NCPC Review Officer:** Michael Weil

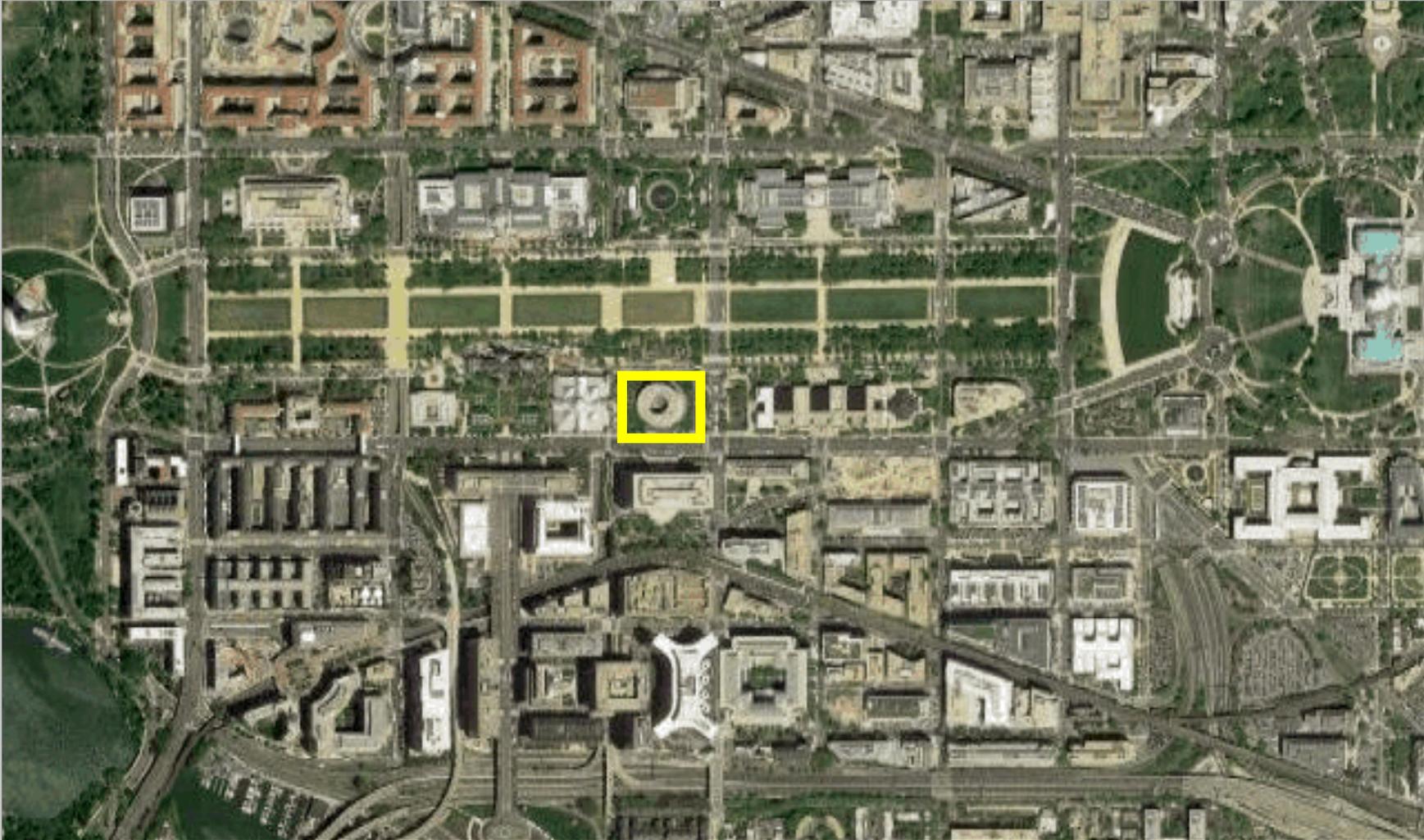
**NCPC File Number:** 7940

## Project Summary:

The Smithsonian Institution has submitted a proposal to install signage to mark the primary public entrance to the lobby on the southeast façade of the Hirshhorn Museum. One of the largest challenges for visitors is to navigate the museum, which includes locating the entrance. There are two revolving doors on the South façade, but due to security risks, only one is guarded and currently in use. The new Hirshhorn sign over the usable revolving door would attract attention and draw visitors to the correct usable door. NCPC previously approved white acrylic letters over the door in January 2018, which were never installed.

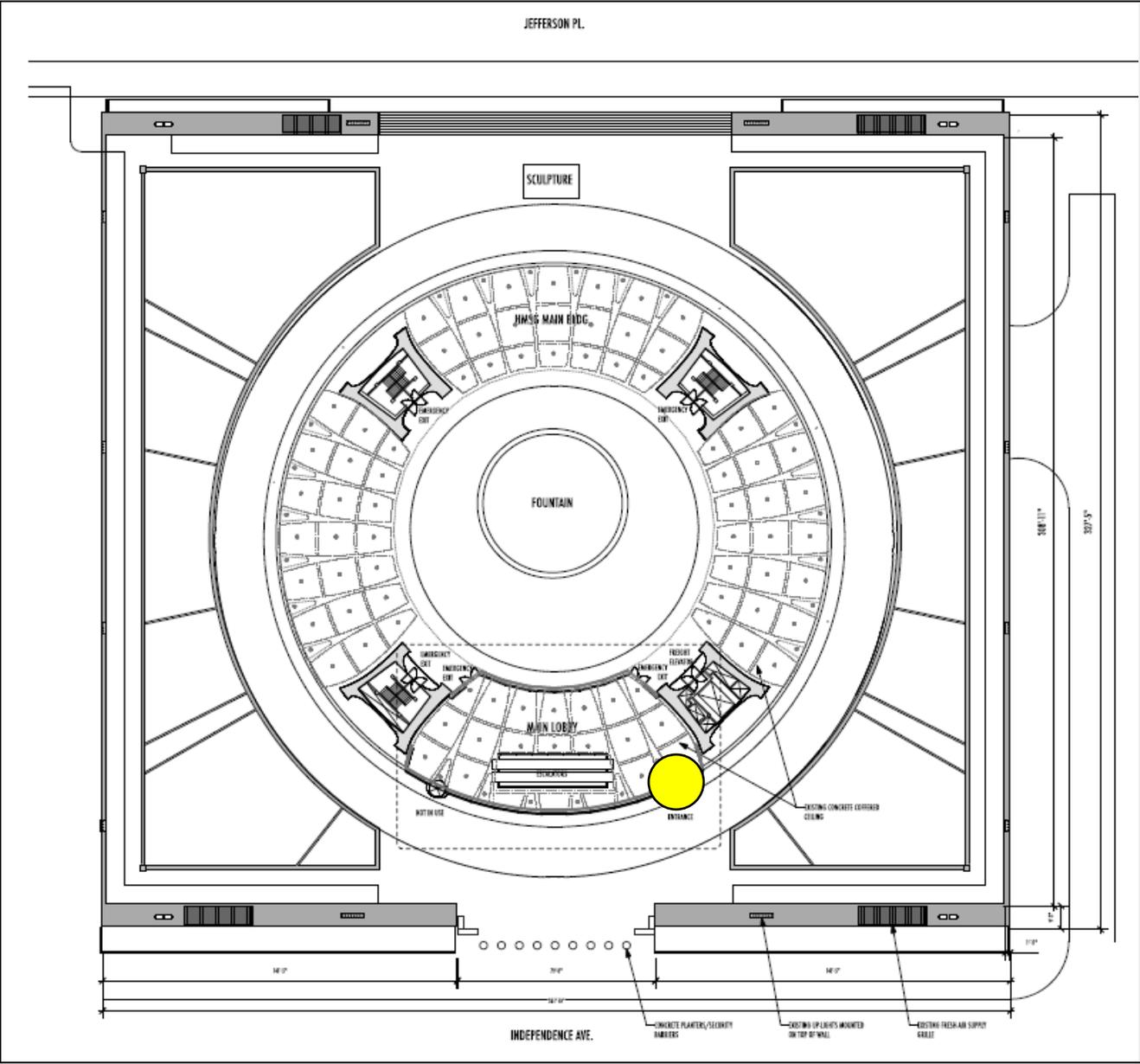
The revised design reduces the letters in size from 18 inches in height and 6 inches in depth (previous design) to 15 inches in height and 4 inches in depth, creating a slimmer profile. This is an eco friendly option compared to the original design, with recyclable and sustainable metals. The letters will be stud mounted and attached to a steel base plate. The material of the letters has changed to non-directional finished bronze to match the bronze and brass furniture and accents found within the lobby. The face of the letters shall be a lighter bronze patina with the back and return a moderately darker bronze patina to increase legibility. The exact letter placement will be adjusted on site during installation to obtain optimal spacing of the individual letters.

# Site Location



Location Map

# Project Location



# Proposed Revised Entry Signage

The proposed revision to the project suggests changing the material of the sign to bronze and reducing the height, width, and depth of the individual letters.



Rendering of white acrylic material over southeast entrance

previously-approved sign - 2018



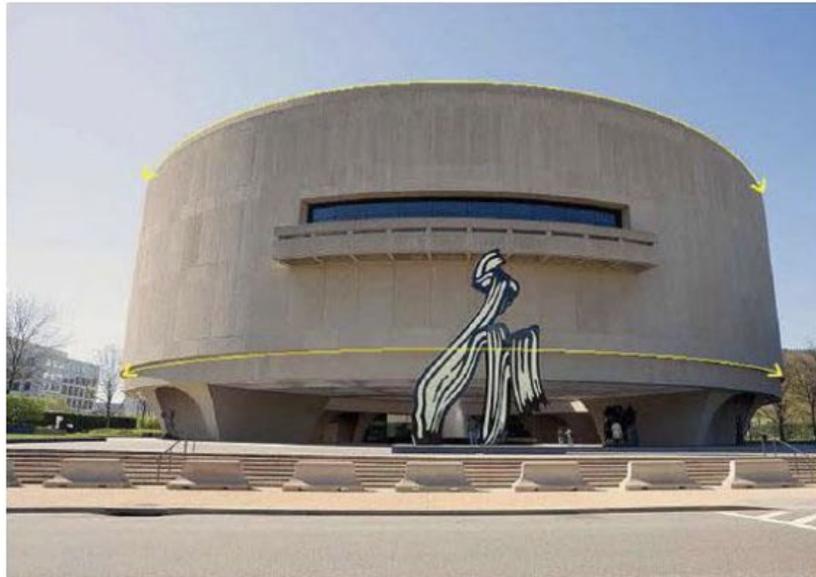
Rendering of non-directional bronze material over southeast entrance

**CURRENT PROPOSAL**

# Design Inspiration

## Inspiration for the Design

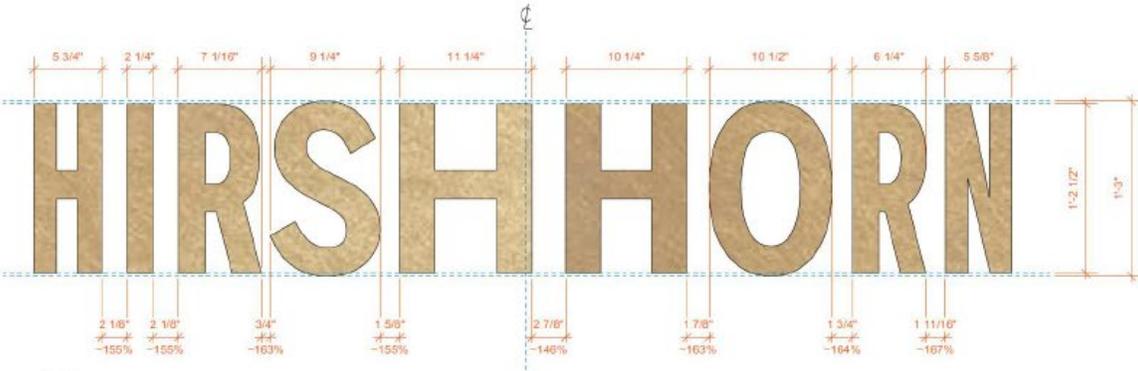
The Hirshhorn asked Li, Inc., the same company that redesigned the Hirshhorn's logo in 2016, to design the entry sign. When designing the logo, they drew inspiration from the shape of the building and distorted the letters to give the illusion of a curve. The entry sign is based on this same concept as the primary logo to maintain consistency with branding.



# HIRSHHORN

100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100%

1 Standard Graphic Logo  
X501 NTS



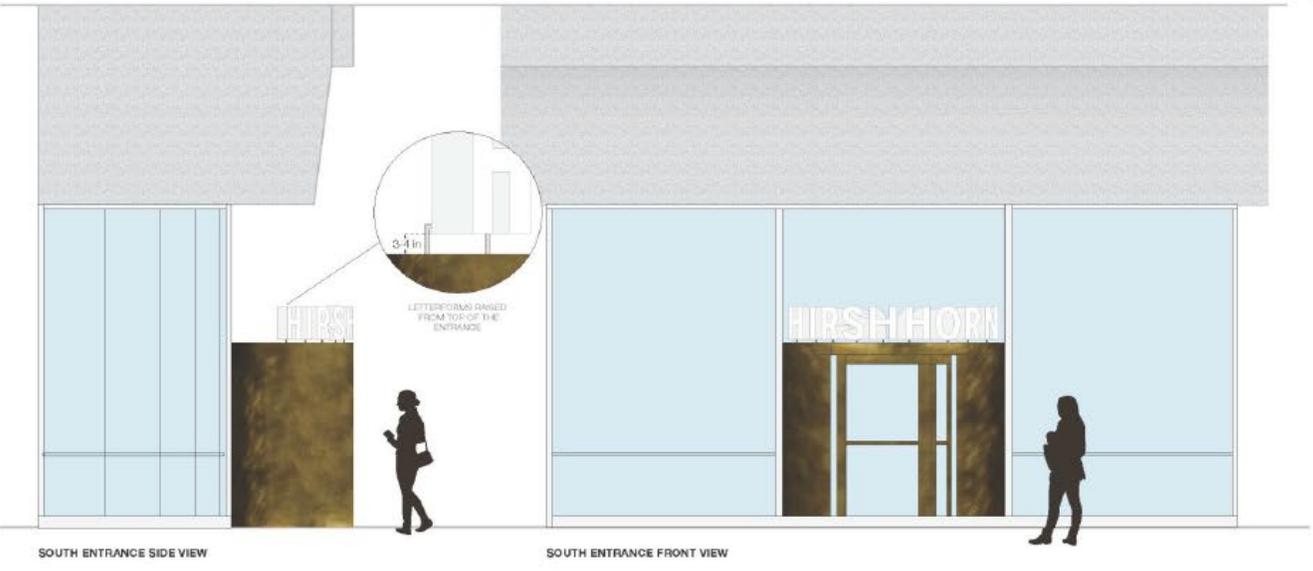
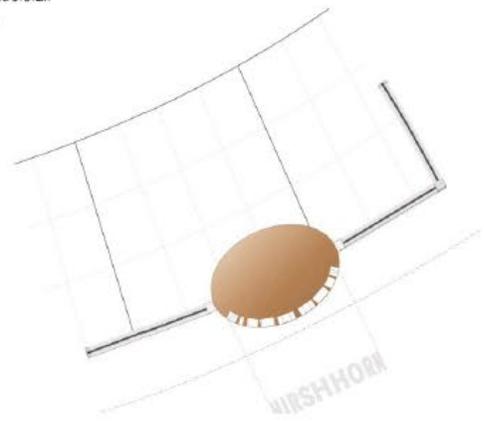
2 Modified Letter Spacing for Sign  
Scale: 1 1/2" = 1'-0"

# Design Details

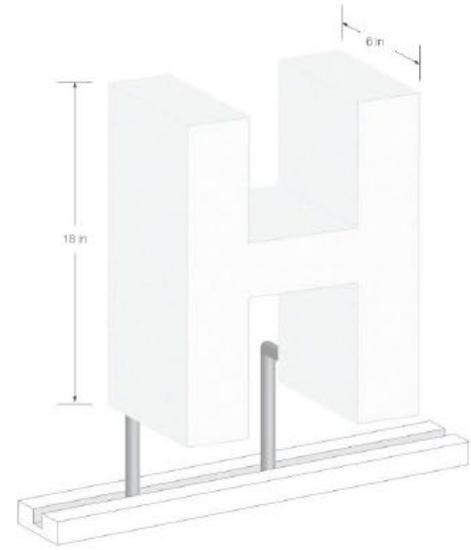
### Details of Letters and Mounting System (Approved)

The proposed exterior signage consists of individual dimensional letters measuring 18 inches in height and 6 inches in depth attached to a metal raceway. The metal raceway support system is a readily reversible condition should the exterior signage program change in the future. The raceway and letters will be arranged to correspond to the curve of the revolving door drum. The raceway will be pin-mounted with the minimum number of attachments required with a 3/4 inch reveal. The dimensional letters will be a white, powder coated aluminum with no internal illumination. The size of the letters and finish color complement the scale of the south façade and building materials palette.

HIRSHHORN  
SIGNAGE AND WAYFINDING SYSTEM  
ENTRANCE ID  
ENTRANCE FLOOR PLAN



3/16/2024 (Signage and Wayfinding - 04/24/24)

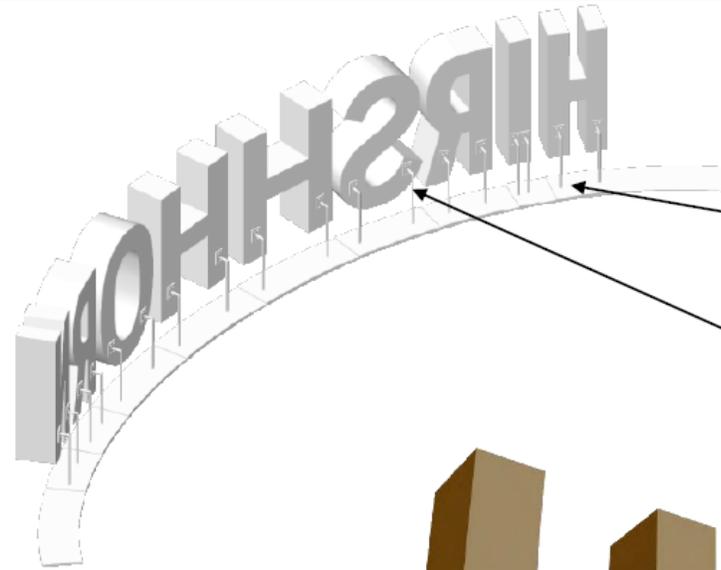


18" x 6" white powder-coated aluminum letter attached to metal raceway

# Design Details

## Details of Letters and Mounting System (Revised)

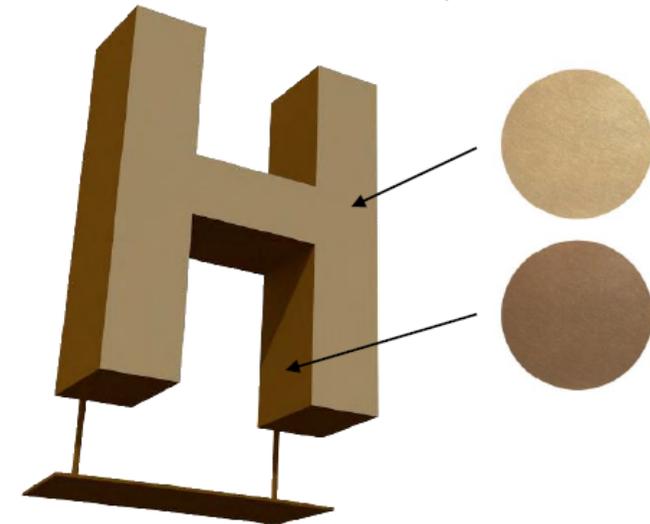
The revised design reduces the letters in size from 18 inches in height and 6 inches in depth to 15 inches in height and 4 inches in depth, creating a slimmer profile. This is an eco-friendly option, as compared to the original acrylic design, by using recyclable and sustainable metals. The letters will be stud mounted and attached to a steel base plate. How the steel base plate attaches to the top of the door is yet to be determined, but will be a reversible addition. The material of the letters has changed to non-directional finished bronze. The non-directional finish matches the bronze and brass furniture and accents found within the lobby. The face of the letters shall be a lighter bronze patina with the back and return a moderately darker bronze patina to increase legibility. Also to increase legibility, the exact letter placement will be adjusted on site during installation to obtain optimal spacing of the individual letters. The overall width is therefore variable.



steel base rail fastened to top of entranceway, thickness TBD

1/8" thick steel letter base plate mechanically fastened to base rail through slotted holes for adjustability (proposed, TBD)

1/4" steel mounting rod welded to base plate and mechanically fastened to letter backs (proposed, TBD)



15" x 4" letter with light bronze face and moderate bronze patina on the return and back on a steel base and mount, powder-coated to match moderate bronze patina.

# Comparison

## Comparison of Approved and Revised Designs



Full scale unpainted MDF mock-up of original design.  
18 inches in height, 6 inches in depth, overall width TBD pending installation



Photographic rendering of revised design.  
15 inches in height, 4 inches in depth, overall width TBD pending installation