



Date August 23, 2021

**RESOLUTION CLOSING HEARING AND APPROVING THE DESIGNATION OF THE “SNOOKIES NEON SIGN” LOCATED AT 1810 BEAVER AVENUE AS A LOCAL LANDMARK.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Des Moines received an application from James Hunter and Connie Conrad-Hunter, Owners of Snookies Malt Shop, to designate the “Snookies Neon Sign” (the “Snookies Neon Sign”) located on the premises of 1810 Beaver Avenue as a local landmark. The property on which this sign stands is legally described as:

LOT 3, EXCEPT THE NORTH 1 FOOT THEREOF; LOT 4 AND THE NORTH 25 FEET OF LOT 5, ALL IN HAZELWOOD, AN OFFICIAL PLAT, ALL NOW INCLUDED IN AND FORMING A PART OF THE CITY OF DES MOINES, POLK COUNTY, IOWA.

and;

**WHEREAS**, the application contains detailed references to the historical nature of the Snookies Neon Sign in the application; and,

**WHEREAS**, on June 22, 2021, upon review of the application, the Landmark Review Board unanimously recommended to the Plan and Zoning Commission that the application be approved; and,

**WHEREAS**, on July 15, 2021, the Plan and Zoning Commission, by a vote of 13-0, recommended to the Council approval of the application; and

**WHEREAS**, the Des Moines Municipal Code section 58-60 requires a public hearing be held to consider the application; and,

**WHEREAS**, on August 8, 2021, by Roll Call No. 21-1208, it was duly resolved by the City Council that the request for Local Landmark Designation be set down for hearing on August 23, 2021, at 5:00 p.m., to be held in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 400 Robert D. Ray Drive, Des Moines, Iowa; and

**WHEREAS**, due notice of the hearing was published in the Des Moines Register, as provided by law, setting forth the time and place for hearing on said proposed Local Landmark Designation; and

**WHEREAS**, the hearing was held pursuant to that notice.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the City Council of the City of Des

Date August 23, 2021

Moines, Iowa, as follows:

1. The public hearing on the application is hereby closed.
2. The “Snookies Neon Sign” meets the requirements of Des Moines Municipal Code section 58-58 to be designated as a local landmark because the sign:

- Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture; and,
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

3. The City Council accepts the recommendation of the Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission and grants the application of the Des Moines Parks and Recreation Department to have the “Snookies Neon Sign” designated a local landmark.

4. The City Clerk is directed to file the designation and description of the “Snookies Neon Sign” with the Development Services Department and record this resolution as the designation and description of “Snookies Neon Sign” in the office of the county recorder.

**(Council Communication No. 21-375)**

Moved by \_\_\_\_\_ to grant the application for the Designation of “Snookies Neon Sign” as a local landmark.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Judy K. Parks-Kruse  
 Judy K. Parks-Kruse  
 Assistant City Attorney

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE				
BOESEN				
GATTO				
GRAY				
MANDELBAUM				
VOSS				
WESTERGAARD				
TOTAL				

MOTION CARRIED APPROVED

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Mayor

**CERTIFICATE**

I, P. Kay Cmelik, City Clerk of said City, hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 City Clerk

Date August 23, 2021  
 Agenda Item 46  
 Roll Call # \_\_\_\_\_

July 22, 2021

Honorable Mayor and City Council  
 City of Des Moines, Iowa

Members:

Communication from the City Plan and Zoning Commission advising that at their July 15, 2021 meeting, the following action was taken regarding a request from James Hunter and Connie Conrad-Hunter (owners) to designate the “Snookies Neon Sign” at 1810 Beaver Avenue as a local Landmark.

**COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

After public hearing, the members voted 13-0 as follows:

Commission Action:	Yes	Nays	Pass	Absent
Francis Boggus	X			
Dory Briles	X			
Abby Chungath				X
Kayla Berkson	X			
Chris Draper	X			
Jann Freed	X			
Todd Garner	X			
Johnny Alcivar	X			
Lisa Howard				X
Carolyn Jenison	X			
William Page	X			
Rocky Sposato	X			
Steve Wallace	X			
Greg Wattier	X			
Emily Webb	X			

**APPROVAL** that the “Snookies Neon Sign” be designated as a local Landmark.  
 (20-2021-4.01)

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION TO THE P&Z COMMISSION**

Staff recommends that the “Snookies Neon Sign” be designated as a local Landmark.



## STAFF REPORT TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION

### I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. **Case Overview:** The subject property is located on the west side of Beaver Avenue at the intersection of Beaver Avenue and 41<sup>st</sup> Street. It contains the Snookies Malt Shop. The 1950's-era neon sign – likely from a Dairy Queen – was acquired by the original owners in 1986 and was installed on site after being repainted and rebranded.

On June 22, 2021, the Landmark Review Board unanimously approved the recommendation that the “Snookies Neon Sign” be designated a local Landmark. The Board is comprised of the Historic Preservation Commission and the Urban Design Review Board. The Board meets as needed to review nominations and proposed alternations to landmarks not located within a local historic district.

The Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for review in accordance with Chapter 58-60 and Chapter 82-40 of the City Code. If the sign is designated as a Landmark then any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council.

2. **Size of Site:** 0.469 acres.
3. **Existing Zoning (site):** “MX1” Mixed Use District.
4. **Adjacent Land Use and Zoning:**
  - North** – “MX1”; Uses are commercial.
  - South** – “MX1”; Use is commercial.
  - East** – “MX1”; Uses are commercial.
  - West** – “MX1”; Use is commercial.
5. **Applicable Recognized Neighborhood(s):** The subject building is located within the shared area of the Beaverdale and Waveland Park Neighborhoods. All recognized neighborhoods were notified of the meeting by mailing of the Final Agenda on July 9, 2021. All agendas are mailed to the primary contact(s) designated by the recognized neighborhood association to the City of Des Moines Neighborhood Development Division. The Beaverdale Neighborhood Association mailings were sent to Marcus Coenen, P.O. Box 30175, Des Moines, IA 50310. The Waveland Park Neighborhood Association mailings were sent to Anna Mason, 1434 44<sup>th</sup> Street, Des Moines, IA 50311.
6. **PlanDSM Land Use Plan Designation:** Community Mixed Use.
7. **Applicable Regulations:** Pursuant to Chapter 82-40(a) of the City Code, the Plan and Zoning Commission is an advisory body to the City Council and is a key factor in the growth and development of the city. Therefore, the Commission reviews all local Landmark and Historic District nominations in accordance with the Historic



Preservation Ordinance and for compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan and forwards a recommendation to the City Council.

## **II. APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF THE CITY CODE**

Section 58-56 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance contains the landmark purpose statement. Section 58-58 contains the criteria for the designation of a landmark and Section 58-60 establishes the nomination process.

### **Sec. 58-56. Purpose.**

It is declared as a matter of public policy that the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of improvements of special character or special historical or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people. The purpose of this article is to:

- (1) Effect and accomplish the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of such improvements which represent or reflect elements of the city's cultural, social, economic, political and architectural history;
- (2) Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage, as embodied and reflected in such improvements;
- (3) Stabilize and improve property values;
- (4) Foster civic pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past;
- (5) Protect and enhance the city's attractions to residents, tourists, and visitors and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry;
- (6) Strengthen the economy of the city; and
- (7) Promote the use of landmarks for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.

### **Sec. 58-58. Designation criteria.**

- (a) For purpose of this article, a landmark or landmark site designation may be placed on any site, natural or improved, including any building, improvement or structure located thereon that possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that:
  - (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;
  - (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
  - (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
  - (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents

- a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.
- (b) Ordinarily cemeteries, birthplaces, or graves of historical figures; properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes; structures that have been moved from their original locations; reconstructed historic buildings; properties primarily commemorative in nature; and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years shall not be considered eligible for the landmark designation. However, such properties will qualify if they fall within the following categories:
- (1) A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.
  - (2) A building or structure removed from its original location which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event.
  - (3) A birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance, if there is no appropriate site or building directly associated with his or her productive life.
  - (4) A cemetery which derives its primary significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, from age, from distinctive design features, or from association with historic events.
  - (5) A reconstructed building when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other building or structure with the same association has survived.
  - (6) A property primarily commemorative in nature, if design, age, tradition or symbolic value has invested it with its own historical significance.
  - (7) A property achieving significance within the past 50 years, if it is of exceptional importance.

**Sec. 58-60. Procedures.**

- (a) The historic preservation commission shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located within historic districts, and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below. The landmark review board shall consider the nomination of landmarks and landmark sites located outside historic districts and make a report and recommendation on such nomination to the city plan and zoning commission and city council as provided below.
- (b) Notice that an application for designation of a landmark or landmark site is being considered shall be given to the owner of the parcel on which the proposed landmark is situated or which is part of the proposed landmark site in accordance with the following:
- (1) Such notice shall be served by certified mail, addressed to the owner at his or her last known address as such appears in the records of the county treasurer's office, or if there is no name on such records, such notice may be served by regular mail addressed to "owner" at the street address of the property in question.



- (2) Such owner shall have the right to confer with the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, prior to final action by the commission or board on the application.
  - (3) The historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, may, in addition, hold the public hearing of the proposed designation by giving notice as required by law.
- (c) After such investigation by the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as is deemed necessary, but in no case more than 60 days after the receipt of the complete application, the application for designation shall be recommended for approval or disapproval. Such recommendation shall be in writing and signed by the chair of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board, as applicable, and shall state the reasons for recommending approval or disapproval. The recommendation may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site as described in the application or may include modifications thereof. Such recommendation shall be forwarded to and filed with the plan and zoning commission, within five days after making such recommendation.
  - (d) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the plan and zoning commission shall schedule a public hearing at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
  - (e) Within 30 days after the public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall forward such application to the city council, together with the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board. The plan and zoning commission may adopt the recommendation of the historic preservation commission or landmark review board as its own or may prepare a written recommendation of its own. The plan and zoning commission may limit itself to the proposed landmark or landmark site or may include modifications thereof. If the modification requires an additional public hearing, the plan and zoning commission shall hold such hearing before forwarding the application to the city council.
  - (f) Upon receipt of such recommendation, the council shall schedule a public hearing to consider the recommendation at a specific place, date and time, not more than 30 days after such receipt, by giving notice as required by law.
  - (g) The city council, after public hearing, may approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the recommendation of the plan and zoning commission by a majority vote of its membership. If the plan and zoning commission shall have failed to act within the time limit set forth in this section, the city council may, nevertheless, approve, approve with modification, or disapprove the proposed landmark or landmark site as originally proposed or modified by a majority vote of its membership.

## II. ANALYSIS

1. **Landmark Nomination Criteria:** A nomination must demonstrate that the subject building or site possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and meets one or more of the following criterion.

- (1) Is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture;



- (2) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- (3) Is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past;
- (4) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- (5) Has yielded or may be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

The nomination suggests the building meets Criteria 1 and 4. The following points from the submitted form make the case for how the sign “is significant in American history, architecture, archaeology and culture” and “embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.”

- Though not original to the property, the sign is an authentic 1950s-era neon advertisement and comparative visual evidence suggests it was originally a Dairy Queen sign. Archival research reveals the Snookies building was originally constructed and operated as a Dairy Queen in the 1950s, thus the sign correlates with the building's first commercial function.
- The Snookies neon sign has become a signature visual landmark in the Beavertdale neighborhood and the City of Des Moines. Its iconographic status is evidenced by the tradition of locals and visitors taking photographs in front of the sign or “selfies” with the sign featured in the background. A quick social media internet search provides many examples of this cultural practice.
- The sign is also significant in its ability to visually and physically connect with the historical period at which this intersection transitioned to commercial use – the 1940s and 1950s. Not only is it authentically of the era, but it conveys an appropriate authenticity of the mid-century (sub)urban landscape of Beavertdale.
- The Snookies sign is one of few authentic remaining neon signs in the City of Des Moines. Introduced to the United States in 1923 by French businessman Georges Claude, neon signs quickly caught on as a popular fixture in outdoor advertising in the U.S. Neon became symbolic of America’s inventiveness and creativity, with large neon signs dominating downtowns across the country. Neon signs reached their heyday in the 1950s, strongly connected with this country’s growing car culture, suburbanization, and diners/fast food. By the 1960s, sign technologies and public tastes changed. Cheaper alternatives like LED bulbs and plastics became the preferred choice for commercial advertising. Today, few companies retain the appropriate tools and expertise with which to craft new neon signs or repair vintage signs. Neon can be expensive to repair and may not be allowed in newer zoning codes throughout the country. The Snookies sign thus represents a particularly unique era in the craft of commercial sign design

2. **PlanDSM Creating Our Tomorrow:** The PlanDSM Comprehensive Plan was approved on April 25, 2016. The nomination is supported by numerous PlanDSM Goals and Policies including:  
**Land Use Goal 6**

**Recognize the value of Des Moines' historic building stock and landscapes and ensure their preservation**

LU 35: Encourage expansion and establishment of National Historic Districts, local historic districts, and local landmarks.

**Community Character and Neighborhood Goal 1  
Embrace the distinct character offered in each of Des Moines' neighborhoods.**

CCN1: Celebrate the City's culture and diversity through the creation of vibrant neighborhood nodes and corridors.

**Community Character and Neighborhood Goal 4  
Protect Des Moines' historic and cultural assets that contribute to neighborhood and community identity.**

CCN25: Partner with the historic preservation community to promote Des Moines' rich history through education and outreach on historic structures, districts, and landscapes.

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Dory Briles asked if any member of the public or the commission desired to speak on the item. No one requested to speak.

**COMMISSION ACTION:**

Will Page made a motion that the "Snookies Neon Sign" be designated as a local Landmark.

Motion passed: 13-0

Respectfully submitted,



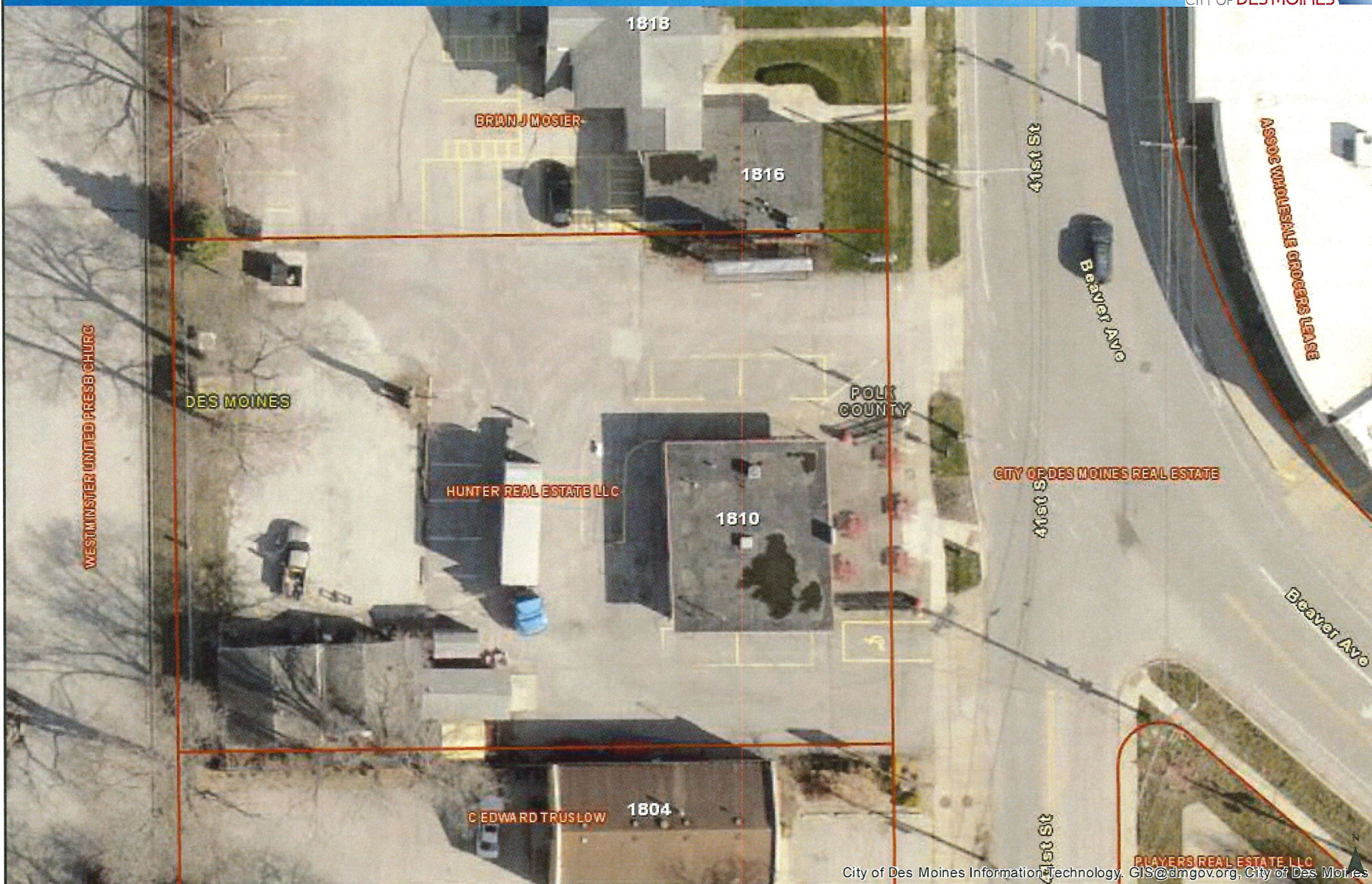
Jason Van Essen, AICP  
Planning & Urban Design Administrator

JMV:tjh

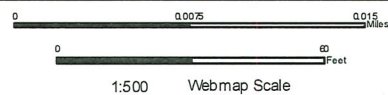


440

# City of Des Moines WebMap



Description



Coordinate System: WGS 1984 Web Mercator Auxiliary Sphere  
 Projection: Mercator  
 Auxiliary Sphere Datum: WGS 1984  
 False Easting: 0.0000  
 False Northing: 0.0000  
 Central Meridian: 0.0000  
 Standard Parallel 1: 0.0000  
 Auxiliary Sphere Type: 0.0000  
 Units: Meter

Author: Author  
 Date: 6/18/2021  
 Time: 10:36:10 AM

Disclaimer: This map is approximate and may not be complete.  
 City assumes no liability for accuracy. Consult sources listed to verify information. Sources: City of Des Moines

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**Landmark Nomination Form**

**Landmark Review Board**

**IDENTIFICATION:**

**SITE NAME** Snookies Neon Sign

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Lot Three(3), EXCEPT the North One (1) foot thereof, and Lot Four (4) and the North Twenty-Five (25) feet of Lot Five (5), all in HAZELWOOD, an Official Plat, now included in and forming a part of the City of Des Moines, Polk County, Iowa

**OWNER(S) NAME** James Hunter and Connie Conrad Hunter

**OWNER(S) SIGNATURE** *James S Hunter* *Connie Conrad Hunter*  
(signed owner's letter of support or petition can be attached in lieu of signature here)

**OWNER(S) ADDRESS** 2817 38<sup>th</sup> Street Des Moines IA 50310  
(street address) (city) (state) (zip)

**CATEGORY:**

**STRUCTURAL/ARCHITECTURAL**  **LANDSCAPE**  **ARCHEOLOGICAL**   
**CULTURAL**

**COMPONENTS** Neon sign mounted on a pole. Sign is 72 inches in diameter, 11 inches thick and the top of the ice cream cone projects 24 inches. Each face of the double-sided sign is painted. A tan and white ice-cream cone projects from a teal circle. "Snookies MALT SHOP" is painted in white. Neon tubing overlays the painted components and stands off the surfaces approximately 3-4". The rim of the primary circular element is edged in teal neon. "Snookies MALT SHOP" is overlaid in pink neon. The ice cream on top of the cone is edged in light yellow neon.

**USE** (present) Ice Cream Shop Sign (past) Ice Cream Shop Sign

**DESCRIPTION:**

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** 1950s **ARCHITECT/BUILDER** Unknown

The specific provenance of this vintage neon sign is unknown. Though it lacks any maker's marks, its design is consistent with neon Dairy Queen signs from the 1950s.

**BUILDING TYPE: NOT APPLICABLE**

Single-family dwelling  Industrial  Other institutional  Religious

Multiple-family dwelling \_\_\_ Educational \_\_\_ Public \_\_\_ Agricultural \_\_\_  
Commercial \_\_\_

**EXTERIOR WALLS:** clapboard \_\_\_ stone \_\_\_ brick \_\_\_ board and batten \_\_\_ shingles \_\_\_  
stucco \_\_\_ other NOT APPLICABLE

**STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:** wood frame with interlocking joints \_\_\_ masonry load-bearing walls \_\_\_  
wood frame with light members (balloon frame) \_\_\_ iron frame \_\_\_ steel frame with curtain walls \_\_\_  
reinforced concrete \_\_\_ other NOT APPLICABLE

**CONDITION:** excellent \_\_\_ good x fair \_\_\_ deteriorated \_\_\_

**INTEGRITY:** original site \_\_\_ moved--if so, when 1986  
from where unknown small town in central Iowa

Information on alterations, additions (with dates & architect, if known) and any other notable features of building/site: Snookies' original owners installed the sign after acquiring it in a small town in central Iowa. The sign was repainted and the neon reworked to incorporate the Snookies brand. This repurposing is common with neon signs and there are accounts of other early Dairy Queen signs being adapted for independently-owned ice cream shops.

**RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:** barn \_\_\_ other farm structures \_\_\_ carriage house \_\_\_  
garage \_\_\_ privy \_\_\_ other NOT APPLICABLE

**SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE:** open land \_\_\_ woodland \_\_\_ scattered outbuildings \_\_\_  
commercial x industrial \_\_\_ residential \_\_\_ densely built-up \_\_\_ other

Prepared by Breann Bye Date March 26, 2021

Address 523 Franklin Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50314

Telephone (641) 521-9340 Email breannbye@outlook.com

Organization

**SIGNIFICANCE:** (Indicate all sources of information for all statements)

Since its installation in the 1980s, the neon Snookies sign has achieved great cultural significance in Des Moines and is a beloved visual landmark. Conferring formal landmark status on this vintage sign will afford a level of preservation and protection from which it does not currently benefit. Though not original to the property, the sign is an authentic 1950s-era neon advertisement and comparative visual evidence suggests it was originally a Dairy Queen sign. Archival research reveals the Snookies building was originally constructed and operated as a Dairy Queen in the 1950s, thus the sign correlates with the building's first commercial function.



Figure 1 | Snookies Malt Shop sign at night

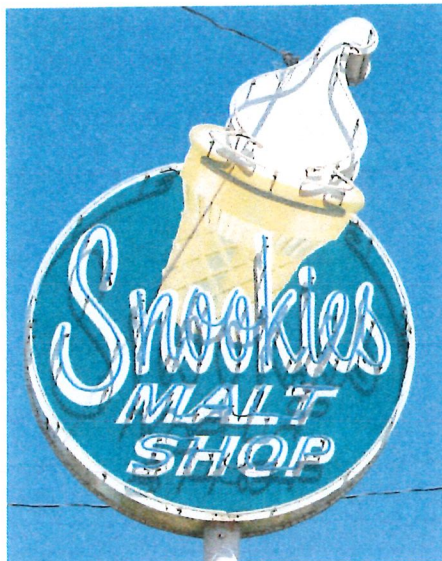


Figure 2 | Snookies Malt Shop sign



The first newspaper clipping on record for the property was published in the *Des Moines Tribune* on September 23, 1926. The narrative indicates the property was originally residential - "The home of Mrs. Gowan C. Williams, 1810 Beaver Avenue, was opened today to the members of the Des Moines Wellesley club for an afternoon party."

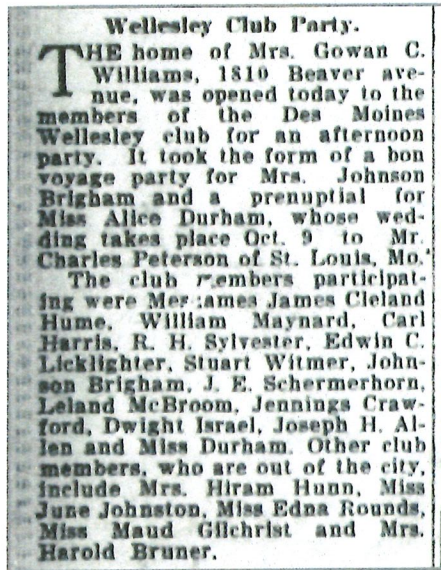


Figure 3 | *Des Moines Tribune*, September 23, 1926

The property does not appear on the 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, but does appear by the 1950 set. The non-extant house was therefore likely constructed between 1920, when it does not appear on the Sanborn maps, and 1926, when it is referenced in the *Des Moines Tribune*.

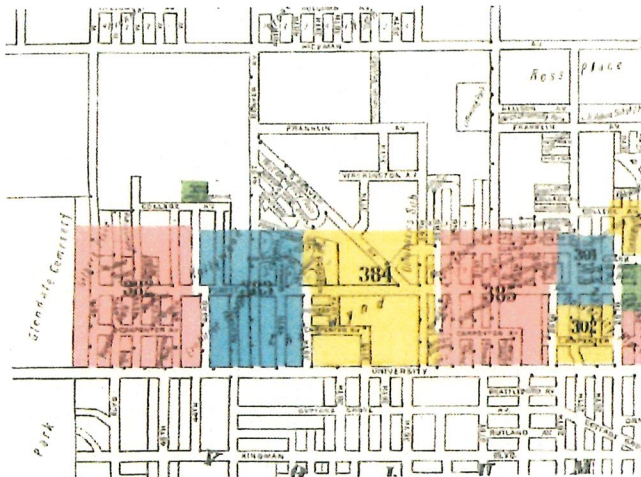


Figure 4 | 1920 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

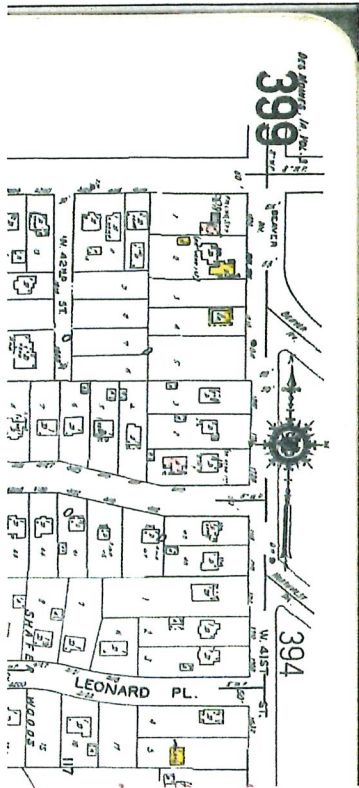


Figure 5 | 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Page 394

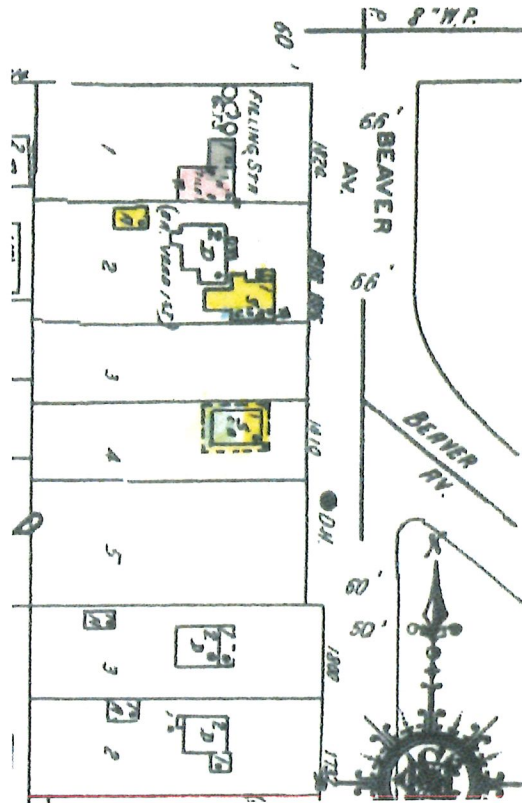


Figure 6 | Detail, 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Page 394

By 1947, the intersections of Beaver Avenue and 41<sup>st</sup> Street and Beaver Avenue and Franklin Avenue had become a small commercial node in the Beavertdale neighborhood. A one-story commercial brick building at 1903 Beaver was built in 1938. According to the Polk County Assessor and corroborated by newspaper archive clippings, the southeast corner of Beaver and Franklin transitioned from a single-family home to a grocery store in 1947. Originally built as "The Food Mart", it was later purchased by Dahl's and is now a Price Chopper. 1810 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue experienced a similar commercial transition and by 1947 the house was functioning as an office for the Dudley Allen Real Estate company.

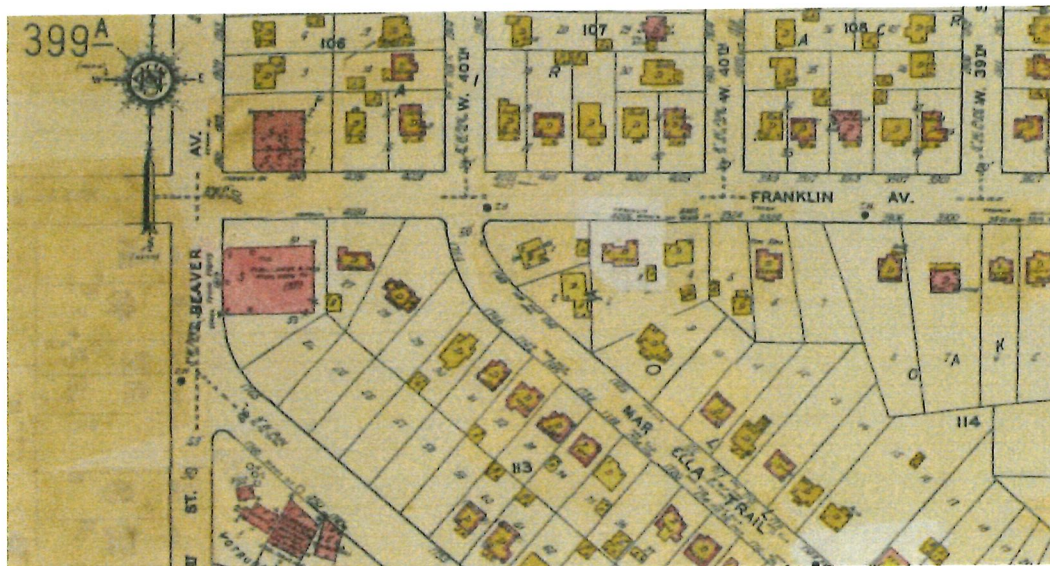


Figure 7 | 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Page 399



**IMMEDIATE POSSESSION**  
**NORTH OF DOUGLAS ON 50TH.**  
 Neat, partly modern, 4 room bungalow, with 2 bedrooms, porch, full basement, lot 50x344. Priced to sell.  
 G. E. Nelson 5-2137. 5-0158.  
**DUDLEY ALLEN REALTY.**  
**1810 BEAVER.**

Figure 8 | *Des Moines Tribune*, December 18, 1947

In 1953, 1810-1814 Beaver Avenue were advertised for purchase in the *Des Moines Register*. The listing describes the property as a "Commercial Location" for stores and apartments.

**COMMERCIAL LOCATION**  
 For Stores And Apartments.  
 1810-1814 BEAVER AVE.  
 LARGE LOTS 127x142.  
**2 GOOD HOMES ON PROPERTY**  
**WANT A QUICK SALE**  
**CALL OR SEE OWNER, 5-2137**

Figure 9 | *Des Moines Register*, March 9, 1953

The properties were purchased, residential structure(s) demolished, the parcels combined, and by 1955 (Polk County Assessor) the structure currently occupying 1810 Beaver Avenue was constructed. Newspaper research suggests the building's original occupant was likely Dairy Queen, as evidenced from an article published in the *Des Moines Tribune* in July of 1959. Originally established in 1938 in Joliet, Illinois, Dairy Queen was an early pioneer of the independently-operated franchise system. By the 1950s, Dairy Queen was expanding rapidly throughout the Midwest and in the Des Moines market. The building's form is also stylistically consistent with Dairy Queens and other ice cream shops of the 1950s. It retains the overhanging eaves and large slanted plate-glass windows so indicative of the era.

At the Dairy Queen store,  
 1810 Beaver ave., thieves  
 forced a padlock on the back  
 door and took about \$10 in  
 pennies from a desk drawer.

Figure 10 | *Des Moines Tribune*, July 2, 1959



# DAIRY QUEEN STORES



- 3520 First St.
- 2225 Ingersoll
- 1810 Beaver
- 7025 Douglas
- BOONE—307 4th St.
- 312 W. Grand, WDM
- 1979 W. Grand, WDM
- 2401 Hickman
- 5421 Douglas
- KNOXVILLE—West on Hiway 92
- 7165 University
- 1325 E. University
- 2225 University
- 3409 SW 9th
- EARLHAM—So. Cherry St.

Figure 11 | Des Moines Tribune, April 18, 1962

In 1963, the Dairy Queen at 1810 Beaver Avenue was converted to an independently-owned establishment called "Beaver Bend", which featured burgers, fries, ice cream, malts, and other foods. It operated as Beaver Bend until the owners began searching for a buyer in late 1983. In 1986, Jim Graves and Marilyn Caves purchased the property and established Snookies Malt Shop. According to oral history passed down through their daughter to the current owner, Graves and Caves acquired the neon ice cream sign in a small central Iowa town, had it repainted/rebranded, the neon reworked, and installed it their first year of operation. The sign is physically and stylistically consistent with Dairy Queen signs of the 1950s, and likely was originally manufactured for that use.

## Snack shop is rich in tradition

For the past 20 years, residents have been making a snack shop called Beaver Bend a tradition for good times and good food.

"We've had kids coming here since before they could see over the counter," said Marie Jenison, 62, who with her husband, Daryl, 63, has operated the shop at 1810 Beaver Ave. for 20 years and owned it for the past 10 years.

The Jenisons say the shop has become an enjoyable and lucrative venture even though neither of them

like the variety of video games offered. "We have to line them up after school," said Daryl. "We have a couple that come in here every day and compete for highest score, then drag me over to confirm it for them."

Beaver Bend had been a family affair for a number of years when the Jenisons' two children — David, 27, and Diana, 24, — used to work at the shop when they were younger.

Teen-agers are the best workers, Daryl said. "Between the ages of 13 and 15 they're good help — eager beavers."

Over the years the Jenisons' shop has served ice cream, malts, burgers, fries and other goodies to a number of local celebrities, including former Gov. Robert Ray. "He used to drive over here all the time with his kids for ice cream," said Daryl.

Others include the crew from WHO-TV's "PM Magazine" and KCCI's "Mid-day" co-host Dolph Pfullam.

One of the more interesting experiences the Jenisons had was when a woman came into the shop with a bottle of castor oil and asked that it be mixed in with a banana shake, said Marie.

Another is the time a "bunch of fellows" came in with a half-gallon tub and asked Daryl to fill it with a chocolate shake. "I just kept filling it and filling it. They said it was for their boss," he said.

Ginger Van Blaricom, who works next door to the shop at Crescent Communications, is a regular customer at Beaver Bend. "I come in and we talk about what's going on in the area," she said as she waited for her order.

"I enjoy their company, so I come here. Besides, the food's good," she added.

**PICTURE: Page 5N-W.**

had much restaurant experience when they began leasing the shop in 1983.

"Daryl was a tool and die setter until the company went out of business and we managed apartments," said Marie. "Outside of some work I did at a [dime store's] fountain when I went to college, we didn't have any experience."

But the Jenisons agree that it's fun to work at Beaver Bend. Marie enjoys serving the shop's customers, who include a large contingent from nearby Drake University. Daryl likes the location. "There's something different every day," he said.

"I don't dread getting up in the morning to come to work," said Marie. "It's a fun life. Most of the kids are good and the adults are nice."

The Jenisons estimate that they serve 100 to 150 persons in their shop each day. The favorite order is a charbroiled cheeseburger, french fries and a malt, said Marie.

Children who frequent the shop also

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Children who frequent the shop also

## W.D.M. nun credits new hobby to raffle ticket

By ANNE CAMOTTERS-KAY

In the joke about the West Des Moines nun who takes taekwon do, she has the last laugh.

The first laugh was among the parishioners of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in West Des Moines last fall when Sister Anastasia Rose Glenn won a Halloween raffle for six free taekwon do lessons.

Everyone chuckled at the thought of a nun taking taekwon do lessons. Everyone except Sister Anastasia, who couldn't wait to start learning the Korean martial art.

Less than a year later, the petite, gray-haired nun has earned a green belt and a spot in the advanced class at Kim's Academy in Windsor Heights.

"We never dreamed she'd take the lessons," said Marge Monaghan, a Sacred

Figure 12 | Des Moines Register, September 15, 1983

**ICE CREAM SHOP**  
 Days 10:30-4:30 Monday-Friday.  
 Wages are negotiable.  
 Apply in person: Snookies Malt Shop, 1810 Beaver, DM

Figure 13 | Des Moines Register, July 31, 1988

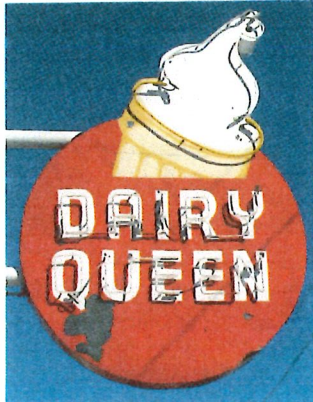


Figure 14 | Original 1950s Dairy Queen Sign, [www.roadsidearchitecture.com](http://www.roadsidearchitecture.com)

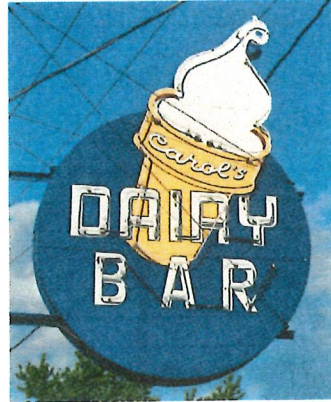


Figure 15 | 1950s Dairy Queen Sign rebranded as Carol's Dairy Bar, [www.roadsidearchitecture.com](http://www.roadsidearchitecture.com)

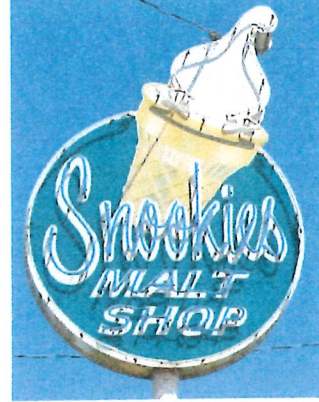


Figure 16 | Snookies Malt Shop sign – design is consistent with original Dairy Queen signs

Since its installation, the Snookies neon sign has become a signature visual landmark in the Beaverdale neighborhood and the City of Des Moines. Its iconographic status is evidenced by the tradition of locals and visitors taking photographs in front of the sign or “selfies” with the sign featured in the background. A quick social media internet search provides many examples of this cultural practice.

The sign is also significant in its ability to visually and physically connect with the historical period at which this intersection transitioned to commercial use – the 1940s and 1950s. Not only is it authentically of the era, but it conveys an appropriate authenticity of the mid-century (sub)urban landscape of Beaverdale.

Finally, the Snookies sign is one of few authentic remaining neon signs in the City of Des Moines. Introduced to the United States in 1923 by French businessman Georges Claude, neon signs quickly caught on as a popular fixture in outdoor advertising in the U.S. Neon became symbolic of America’s inventiveness and creativity, with large neon signs dominating downtowns across the country. Neon signs reached their hey day in the 1950s, strongly connected with this country’s growing car culture, suburbanization, and diners/fast food. By the 1960s, sign technologies and public tastes changed. Cheaper alternatives like LED bulbs and plastics became the preferred choice for commercial advertising. Today, few companies retain the appropriate tools and expertise with which to craft new neon signs or repair vintage signs. Neon can be expensive to repair and may not be allowed in newer zoning codes throughout the country. The Snookies sign thus represents a particularly unique era in the craft of commercial sign design and deserves protection.

**SOURCES** (for primary and secondary sources give complete facts of publication: author, title, place of publication, date, etc.):



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