City Council Agenda Item Report

FROM: Ryan Cummins, City Manager

MEETING DATE: October 27, 2025

SUBJECT: Proposal for Updating Historic District Signage

DESCRIPTION:

The Historic District Commission (HDC) has established a goal to update the signage that designates the district:

The HDC sought and received the attached design proposal from Concept A. At their September 4 meeting, the HDC recommended that Council approve the proposal. The HDC is recommending that at least three signs be installed: Replacement of the signs along Lake and Holland and a new sign at the corner of Allegan and Lake.

Council Priorities and Recommendation

Updating the historic district signage aligns with Council's approved priority to update signage and wayfinding. The Parks and Public Works committee has also expressed a desire to pursue updated signage.

Potentially updating our City logo and branding are also on the forefront and are a key component of updating our City signage and wayfinding. Whether updated historic district

signage should align with that new branding or should have its own appearance should be evaluated as part of a larger project. I recommend incorporating this work into a future RFP.

BOARD/COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:
The HDC recommends that the proposal be approved as a standalone project. The HDC Chair will be at the workshop meeting.

BUDGET ACTION:
Logo redesign, wayfinding, and park signage were budgeted for this fiscal year.

LEGAL REVIEW:
N/A at this time.

SAMPLE MOTION:
Motion to approve the historic district signage proposal from Concept A Creative Studio.

Concept A
Creative Studio

AUGUST 14, 2025

PROPOSAL OF WORK
Saugatuck Historic District Signage

Overview
Saugatuck's Historic District is an officially recognized district that follows U.S. Department of the Interior guidelines for historic preservation. This means it's managed under the same national standards used by other well-known historic districts around the country, such as Georgetown, Bunker Hill, German Village, and Heritage Hill. This district is overseen by a seven-member commission appointed by the Mayor of Saugatuck. Each member receives training on the preservation standards upheld. This area is an essential part of Saugatuck's charm, with its historic character woven into the fabric of what makes the community so special.

Project Purpose
Currently, there are two signs marking the entrances to the Historic District: one on Lake Street just off Blue Star Highway, and one on Holland Street near The Southerner. These correspond to the district's boundary points. The existing signs follow a standard MDOT style—brown background with white lettering—which feels more institutional than celebratory. We believe the signage should better reflect the significance and spirit of the district.

The commission would like to have signage created that elevates both the district and the city of Saugatuck. We would consider possibly adding 1–2 more signs—such as at the bottom of Allegan Street at Lake—so there might be 3–4 total instead of just two.

Design Goals
The design and finished signage should:

- Feel fresh and celebratory while remaining timeless yet relevant for today.
- Instill a sense of pride and remind residents they are part of a special place worth celebrating.
- Coordinate with Saugatuck/Douglas branding without feeling promotional or part of a marketing campaign.
- Communicate both the boundaries of the district and the reason for celebrating it.
- Use either a distinctive voice or a strong graphic-forward approach to communicate boundary and significance.

Proposed Timing + Creative Process
Design
- Research/Discovery: review similar distinctive districts + identify what makes signage stand out
- Develop creative for Saugatuck Historic District signage; share concept on Thursday, Aug. 28th
- Revise creative concepts as outlined + estimate fabrication of signs; share on Thursday, Sept. 18th
- Prepare files for manufacturing and share with supplier on Thursday, Sept. 25th

Fabrication + Installation
- Target fabrication for October 2025; cost TBD based on final number of signs.
- Installation targeted for first half of November 2025

Estimated Creative Fees
Includes the design process and meetings as outlined above. Costs of sign fabrication and installation TBD.

$880