

Docket Item #s 3, 4 & 5
BAR CASE #2010-
0171/172/173

BAR Meeting
July 21, 2010

ISSUE: Partial Demolition, Alterations and Signs

APPLICANT: 106 Union Ireland, LLC

LOCATION: 106 South Union Street

ZONE: CD / Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the applications for demolition, alterations, and signs, with the following conditions:

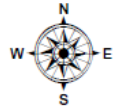
1. That the entrance be as shown in the supplemental drawings;
2. That if the existing roofing must be replaced that standing seam metal be used and that the rooftop mechanical screen be the same material, design and color;
3. That the projecting hanging sign on S. Union St. be reduced to approximately 15 square feet total;
4. That the statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Demolition, Foundation/Basement Plans, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
 - b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
5. The applicant shall work to conserve the historical lettering on the façade of the building. Construction shall not have an adverse effect on this historical sign.

****EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of final approval if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.

****BUILDING PERMIT NOTE:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Building and Fire Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.



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Note: Staff coupled the three reports for 106 S. Union Street, BAR #2010-00171 (Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate), BAR #2010-00172 (Certificate of Appropriateness), and BAR #2010-00173 (Signs) for clarity and brevity. This item requires a roll call vote.

I. ISSUE

Special use permit SUP2010-00010 for restaurant use and a license agreement for outdoor dining in Wales Alley (a public right-of-way) were approved by City Council on May 15, 2010 and June 22, 2010. The application now before the Board is to determine the appropriateness of alterations to the existing masonry warehouse building.

II. HISTORY

History of 106 South Union Street

The existing two-story rectangular brick warehouse at 106 South Union Street was constructed between 1912 and 1921 according to Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. In 2005, a very brief Historic Structures Report for 106 South Union Street was written by Derek Manning. According to this report, the warehouse and store at 106 South Union Street was constructed in **1916** by the Hunt and Roberts Feed and Grain Company. Prior to the construction of the existing building, earlier Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, the G. M. Hopkins *City Atlas of Alexandria from 1877*, and 19th century deed and tax records depict a warehouse with a similar footprint at this location. In 1962, the building was sold and converted into a retail establishment, a use which continued until Olson's Books vacated the property several years ago. Despite numerous alterations over time, the existing early 20th century brick warehouse building retains a significant degree of historic integrity in regard to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and is one of the few remaining buildings representing the historic industrial character of Alexandria's early 20th century waterfront.

History of Wales Alley (Fitzgerald's Alley)

The current alley is representative of the historic mid block alley patterns along the waterfront. The alleys served as drainage swales for the large warehouse roofs as well as fire separation from other warehouses. The G. M. Hopkins *City Atlas of Alexandria from 1877* illustrates the many alleys amid the warehouses that ran east/west from Union Street to the waterfront and wharves. Very few of the alleys depicted in 1877 remain.

Previous BAR Approvals

The Board has approved numerous alterations to this structure since 1964, including the exterior stairway (fire escape), air conditioners, a greenhouse, a fence, signs, and awnings. Major alterations to the building were approved on 12/3/1980 for a "records and tapes store" (Olson's).

III. ANALYSIS

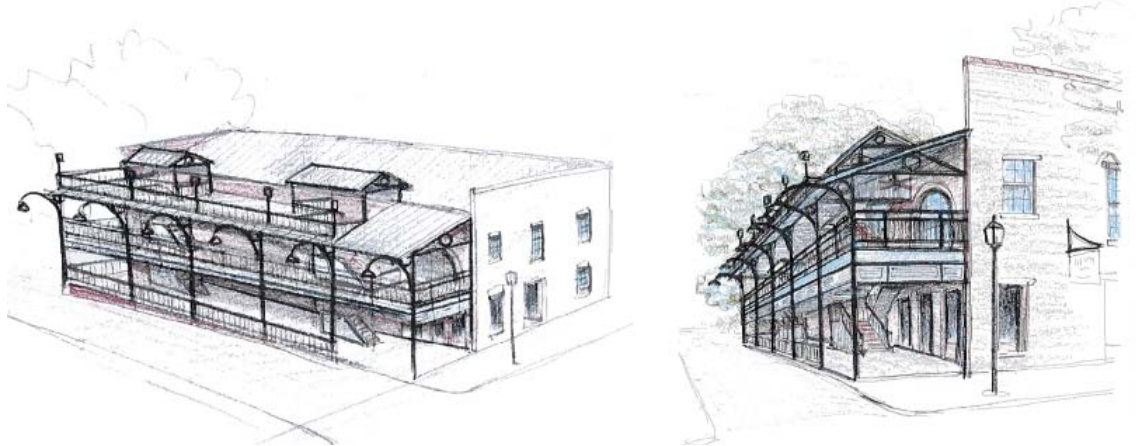
Note: Staff has worked closely with the applicant to refine the design of the building over the past several months. At staff's request, the architect has submitted supplemental drawings in response to recent staff comments. These drawings are attached to the original application materials. Staff's comments throughout this report refer to the design shown in the supplemental drawings.

The proposed alterations comply with Zoning Ordinance requirements, pending compliance with the SUP conditions.

Description of the Existing Building

The existing two story warehouse at 106 S. Union St. was constructed with solid brick exterior walls, using a six course American bond, which rest on a poured concrete foundation. Rectangular parapets at the east and west ends, capped by a terra cotta coping, present a more formal façade to the streets and partially conceal a shed roof which slopes to the north, toward Wales Alley. The interior framing is heavy timber construction. A large skylight was installed during the Olson's alterations.

Like the remaining 19th century warehouses in the 200 block of S. Union Street, this severely simple commercial structure is void of any details referencing a formal architectural style. This commercial, minimalist aesthetic is, therefore, the standard by which proposed alterations should be judged to insure that they do not upstage the original character of the building. High style applied ornament or residential architectural features would not be consistent with the historic use of this building or the character of Alexandria's industrial waterfront. The illustration below shows a two story iron gallery proposed by a previous applicant which, in staff's opinion, overwhelmed the building and completely changed its style. That application was withdrawn.

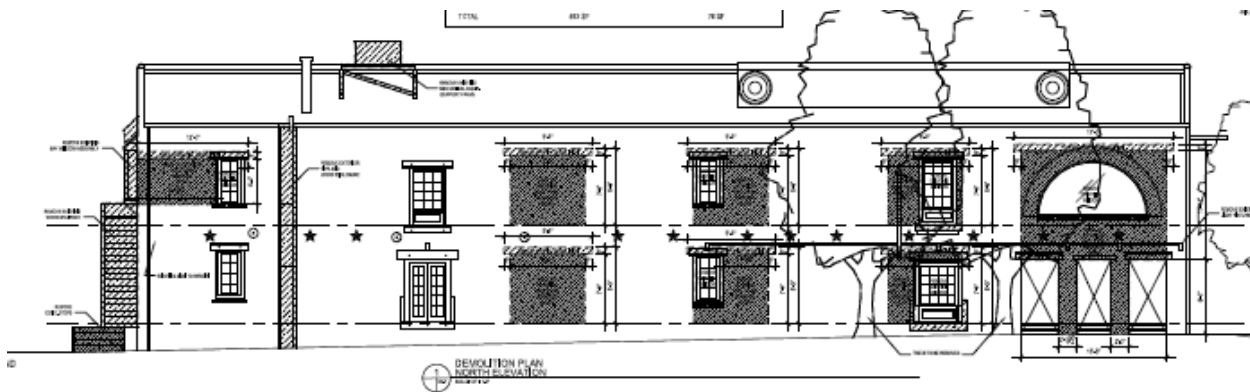


Previous SUP application showing the addition of an inappropriate two story gallery, since withdrawn.

Staff believes that the primary character defining feature of this building is that it is a simple brick box with large punched openings (ie: openings surrounded on four sides by masonry) supported by exposed steel or wood lintels. While the existing windows are fixed multi-pane wood sash in a quasi-Colonial Revival style, these were all installed in the 1981 alteration for Olson's Bookstore and there is evidence in that building permit application and on early photographs that at least some of the original windows were steel sash. According to the National Park Service's *Preservation Brief #13*, rolled steel sash windows became popular for commercial and industrial buildings between 1890 and 1950.

Proposed Alterations

The design concept of the proposed alteration is to retain and enhance the existing vernacular industrial character of the structure, with new work being clearly but subtly differentiated from the original masonry exterior by using metal and glass elements to reference historic warehouse details in a simple but contemporary manner. As shown on the applicant's drawing sheet D4.1, seven of the existing window/door openings on the north elevation will be enlarged and two new openings created in this masonry wall. New steel and glass canopies will be bolted to the north and east walls and a steel and composite wood deck will rest on piers in Wales Alley. The canopies and deck are designed to be easily unbolted and removed if the use should change in the future, meeting the general preservation standard that alterations to historic structures be easily reversible.



Portions of the brick wall proposed for demolition

Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate

In considering a Permit to Demolish, the Board must consider the following criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance, §10-105(B):

- (1) Is the building or structure of such architectural or historical interest that its moving, removing, capsulating or razing would be to the detriment of the public interest?
- (2) Is the building or structure of such interest that it could be made into a historic house?
- (3) Is the building or structure of such old and unusual or uncommon design, texture and material that it could not be reproduced or be reproduced only with great difficulty?
- (4) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve the memorial character of the George Washington Memorial Parkway?
- (5) Would retention of the building or structure help preserve and protect an historic place or area of historic interest in the city?
- (6) Would retention of the building or structure promote the general welfare by maintaining and increasing real estate values, generating business, creating new positions, attracting tourists, students, writers, historians, artists and artisans, attracting new residents, encouraging study and interest in American history, stimulating interest and study in architecture and design, educating citizens in American culture and heritage, and making the city a more attractive and desirable place in which to live?

In this case, although the building itself is one of a small remaining sample of historic warehouse buildings on the waterfront, the severely simple exterior masonry walls are not of uncommon design, texture or material and could be reproduced easily. The amount of masonry to be removed is relatively small and will even be slightly less based on the revised entrance design shown in the

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supplemental drawings. In addition, any masonry or lintels removed to enlarge the window or door openings will be salvaged for reuse on the interior. Therefore, Staff believes that none of the criteria are met for the small amount of masonry proposed for demolition and the Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate should be granted.

Proposed Alterations to the Existing Masonry Warehouse Building

Colors

The design intention is to use and express the existing and proposed materials in an architecturally honest way. The existing brick will remain its existing natural finish and will be repointed where required. Metal features, such as new aluminum clad doors and windows, lintels, light fixtures, canopy framing and entry columns, deck railing and the exterior fire stair are to be painted black. Wood features, such as the sliding panel doors and decking, will be a natural wood color or finish. Exceptions to this color rule are the corrugated metal rooftop mechanical screen, which will be painted to match the color of the adjacent roofing surface in order to visually minimize its appearance, and a few existing wood windows to remain, which will be painted black for consistency with the color of the other fenestration. Black was a color frequently used for steel sash windows in the early 20th century. Color samples for all materials will be available at the hearing.

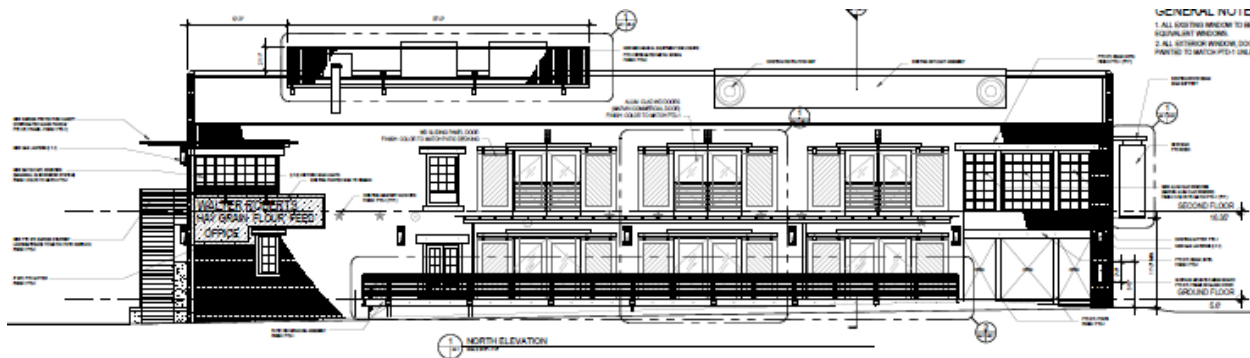
Fenestration

The existing building has a number of different window sizes and shapes, though openings are generally enclosed by a fixed wood, single glazed, multi-light sash, sometimes with a plywood spandrel panel below. A stylistically incongruous, wood bay window was added on the east (Strand) façade during the Olson's alterations. Existing lintels are either wood or two styles of steel and there is evidence of alterations to the masonry as opening sizes changed over time.

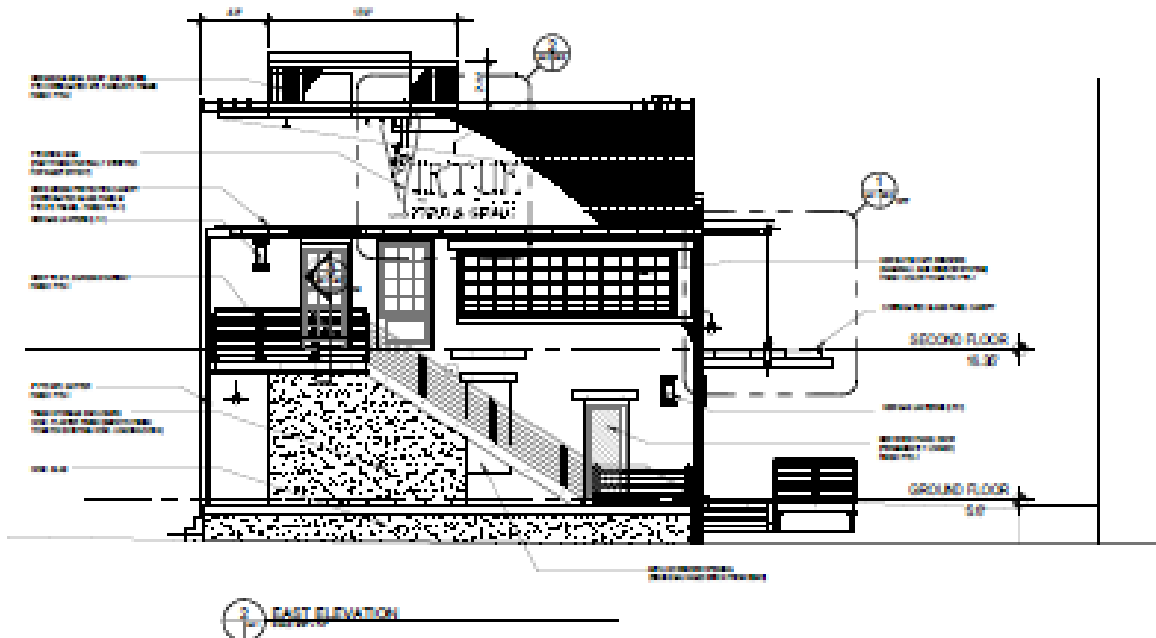
The existing wood windows on the west (Union Street) façade will remain and be repaired or replaced with wood windows to match. The central opening on the first floor will be filled with a new wood window to match the others on this facade.



The existing arched brick opening on the second floor, above the entrance on the north (Wales Alley) wall, will be replaced by tri-partite fixed windows in a new rectangular opening. These windows will be aluminum clad wood insulated glass with simulated divided lights and dark spacer bars to simulate historic steel sash windows.



The six openings in the center of the north wall will have pairs of single light, insulated glass, aluminum clad wood doors. The guardrail in these openings will be painted steel angles with a brass tube handrail and galvanized steel aircraft cable to match the deck in Wales Alley and the new egress stair on the east elevation (see applicant's drawing sheets A5.1, A5.2 & A5.3). These six openings can be closed with sliding wood panel doors that reflect historic fire shutters and are similar to those which appear to have been installed on this building according to the 1956 photo of Wales Alley (see photo on sheet A0.2 and proposed opening details on A8.1).



The proposed windows at the northeast corner of the second floor connect the existing bay window on the east with a single window on the north wall. These windows will be aluminum, simulated divided light, accordion folding sash by Nanawall (sht. A8.2). While the corner window was not a widely used form on early Alexandria warehouse buildings, staff has no objection to this window in this location. Steel sash corner windows were used on a number of Alexandria buildings during this early 20th century period and this proposal expresses the contemporary repurposing of these buildings as the character of Alexandria's waterfront has evolved and views of the river have improved. The architect studied numerous window alternatives for this location and none had the visual balance or honest architectural expression of the current proposal. All windows and doors and new steel channel lintels will be painted black to reflect the typical historic metal sash color, according to the proposed color scheme.



View from the Strand, as revised in the supplemental materials

Entrance

The primary entrance to the building remains at the northwest corner. While the brick arch on the second floor and the three narrow openings at the existing first floor entrance were added during the Olson's alteration, and are a form not historically appropriate on this type building, staff believed the applicant's originally proposed two story, steel framed entrance visually eroded this corner to the point that the historic brick box had lost its visual integrity. The masonry character of the building was further obscured in that scheme because the new canopy on the north wall extended all the way to the west corner of the building. As this important corner is highly visible from the King and Union Street intersection, staff recommended that punched masonry openings at each floor level be retained and that the west end of the new canopy be pulled back toward the east above the outdoor deck, so that the load bearing masonry character of the building is still clearly expressed. The applicant has responded in the supplemental drawings and this is the treatment that staff recommends for approval.



Illustration of original entrance design included with the SUP application, since revised to remove the 1980s era brick arch and reduce the size of the canopy.



Entry design with original BAR submission, showing the extended canopy, since revised.



Entry Design Recommended by Staff with brick spandrel and shortened canopy, as revised in supplemental materials.

Canopies

The proposed steel and glass canopy projects 10'6" from the north side of the building to cover the outdoor deck and is reminiscent of the canopies typically suspended above loading docks. Canopies in these locations were historically suspended because columns would have interfered with loading activity. The canopy on the north side is suspended by steel rods attached to steel arms projecting from the building wall above the second floor windows (see applicant's drawing sht. A5.2). The projecting arms reference the beams and pulleys frequently seen above openings on warehouses or barn hay lofts and were used to raise goods to upper floors. A wooden version of this projecting beam has been used for many years as a sign mount on the west façade.

The canopy on the east side projects 6' from the building face and is required by the building code to reduce the accumulation of snow and ice on the exterior egress stairway. The canopy also covers the accordion corner window which wraps the northeast corner at the second floor and further protects the historic painted sign below. On both canopies, the glass roofing allows filtered light to reach the building and prevents the cover from feeling heavy or obscuring the historic masonry building walls in shadow.

Deck

The patio deck for outdoor dining in Wales Alley will be constructed of wood with a steel C-channel at the perimeter supporting the steel and aircraft cable guardrail. The deck surface will be Trex brand composite wood in a Firepit color. The deck is supported by short steel posts extending through the new brick paving surface to the concrete slab below. (sht. A5.1) During the SUP review, the applicant offered to remove the existing asphalt surface of Wales Alley and replace it with brick pavers, and this was included as a condition of the SUP. Paving for streets and sidewalks is not reviewed by the BAR, per the *Design Guidelines*, but materials historically appropriate for these uses, such as brick pavers, are encouraged.



Illustration Showing Outdoor Dining in Wales Alley, as revised in the supplemental materials.

Light Fixtures

The applicant proposes to install a contemporary version of gas wall sconces between the openings on the first floor. While it is unlikely that a ca. 1916 warehouse in Alexandria would have used gas lamps, staff believes that these attractive fixtures are ephemeral decoration and minor relative to the other alterations proposed. A more typical, and typically overused, RLM dome warehouse style fixture on a gooseneck arm will only be used outside the trash storage room on the Strand and to light the historic Roberts Feed painted sign. Both light fixtures are a black color.

Rooftop Mechanical Screen

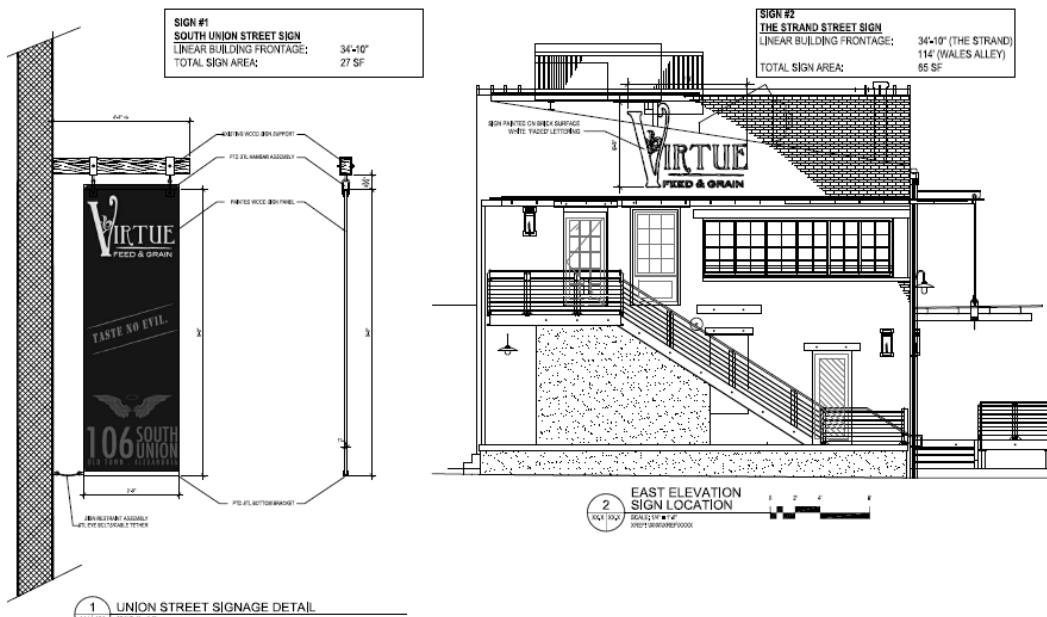
The new restaurant will require larger rooftop HVAC equipment than the previous retail use did. The applicant, therefore, proposes a corrugated metal screen on three sides of the equipment, which has been grouped at the east end of the roof. (sht. A2.3 & A5.4) The screen will be painted off-white to match the existing membrane roofing.

If during construction, the applicant finds the existing roof must be replaced, staff recommends a historically appropriate standing seam metal with the mechanical screen to match the material, design and color and has recommended this as a condition of approval. Staff suggests that oxide red would be the most historically appropriate metal roof color for this warehouse.

Signs

The applicant has proposed two signs for the new restaurant. (sht. A5.3) The first is a 3' x 9' painted wood projecting hanging sign, VIRTUE FEED & GRAIN, to replace a previous Olson's sign suspended from the existing, projecting wood beam above the second floor. The background color is a dark brown with white lettering. No dedicated lighting is proposed for this sign. Staff has no objection to the design of the sign but believes it is slightly out of scale for this space. While the size is well within that allowed by the zoning ordinance, and may, in fact, be the size of the previous Olson's sign, staff believes the character of S. Union St. has changed in the past 25 years and this the proposed sign is now too large for this façade. Staff recommends a sign that is approximately 2'-6" x 6'-0" or 15 square feet. This would be very slightly smaller than the 17.5 square foot size that staff may approve administratively under the Administrative Approval of Signs program.

In addition, the applicant proposes a 6'-9" x 5'-8" sign, VIRTUE FEED & GRAIN, painted in white "faded" lettering on the east wall above the second floor canopy. No dedicated lighting is proposed for this sign. This ghost sign emulates the painted signs typical on warehouses in the 19th and early 20th centuries and which can be found on several nearby buildings. Staff has no objection to this historically appropriate sign type in this location because the lettering will be lightly painted on the masonry and is without a solid color painted background or frame.



East Elevation Showing new Egress Stairway with Trash Enclosure Below on Existing Loading Dock

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Staff will work with the applicant to review the parking directional sign required by the SUP and the menu board under the guidelines of the BAR's Administrative Approval of Signs policy.

Finally, the applicant has been asked to retain and protect the existing painted sign, WALTER ROBERTS, HAY GRAIN FLOUR, OFFICE, on the north wall and the applicant has agreed to do so. This sign is lit by a 16" diameter black Shallow Warehouse Shade on a Gooseneck arm.

Summary

Staff believes that the proposed alterations to this building preserve its essential load bearing masonry vernacular warehouse character. The alterations are very elegantly detailed using high quality materials and are clearly expressed as new while referencing a historic industrial style without reverting to clichés. The major interventions proposed are easily reversible in the future, although very little of the exterior historic fabric is being disturbed and what is removed will be retained and reused on site. Staff compliments the architect on an application package which is very thorough and well organized and is pleased to recommend approval of the application with the revised entrance design shown in the supplemental drawings.

STAFF

Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Administration

No comments received

Historic Alexandria

No comments received

Alexandria Archaeology

Findings

F-1 This property is highly significant for its potential to provide insight into Alexandria's maritime history. The lot is situated on 18th-century fill that was put in place when siltation problems led to navigational issues in the cove that formed the City's harbor. The filling activities created new land to reach the deeper navigation channel of the Potomac River where large sea-going vessels could be loaded and unloaded. By 1800, Jonathan Swift, a prominent merchant, had created a pier and docks extending into the river from this location, and in 1805, Swift insured his warehouse on the waterfront at 106 S. Union for \$7,000. An 1803 map shows the property as the location of Fitzgerald's wharf, and later 19th-century merchants and businessmen included Price and Willis, E. Janney, Hunt and Roberts, J.J. Jamieson & Co, and F.A. Reed Steamship Co. In 1916, Hunt and Roberts constructed the existing warehouse on the site. The building still has the faded lettering advertising the Roberts' business. Archaeological work on this site has the potential to yield significant information about waterfront activities and maritime history in Alexandria.

Recommendations

1. The statements in archaeology conditions below shall appear in the General Notes of all site plans and on all site plan sheets that involve demolition or ground disturbance (including Demolition, Foundation/Basement Plans, Erosion and Sediment Control, Grading, Landscaping, Utilities, and Sheeting and Shoring) so that on-site contractors are aware of the requirements:
 - a. The applicant/developer shall call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-838-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds.
 - b. The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology.
2. The applicant shall work to conserve the historical lettering on the façade of the building. Construction shall not have an adverse effect on this historical sign.

Transportation and Environmental Services

Recommendations

- R-1 The building permit plans shall comply with requirements of City Code Section 8-1-22 regarding the location of downspouts, foundation drains and sump pumps. Refer to Memorandum to Industry dated June 18, 2004. [Memorandum is available online at the City web site under Transportation & Environmental Services\Engineering and Design\Memos to Industry.]. (T&ES)
- R-2 Per SUP2010-00010, separate approval will be required for design of the brick alley. (T&ES)
- R-3 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-4 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R-5 No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)

Findings

- F-1 The proposed improvements to this structure include installing new windows and doors. The overall impact of these alterations will make the existing structure more vulnerable to flooding. Although the City does not require that the applicant install floodproofing measures during this renovation, it is strongly recommended that the applicant consider the cost effectiveness of protecting their investment in this property and use this opportunity while replacing the doors and windows, to install floodproofing measures. Information regarding floodproofing is available at the following FEMA web site:

<http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/floodplain/nfipkeywords/floodproofing.shtm#2>

City Code Requirements

- C-1 This historic nonresidential structure is located in the 100-year floodplain and therefore is subject to the City's floodplain ordinance as included in Section 6-300 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. This ordinance includes the following provisions:
 - a. The proposed outdoor decking is considered fill and therefore is required to meet the following requirement: "No filling of any kind shall be allowed within the boundaries of any AE zone floodplain district except where such filling, when considered in conjunction with all other uses, existing and proposed, will not increase the water surface elevation of the 100-year-flood more than one-half foot. No filling of any kind shall be allowed within the floodway except where such filling will not increase that water surface elevation of the 100-year flood. Persons proposing such filling shall furnish specific engineering data and information as to the effect of their proposed action on future flood heights and shall obtain approval from the director of transportation and environmental services prior to any filling."
 - b. The proposed outdoor deck, railing and canopy are considered new construction and unless these new structures are elevated above the 100-year-flood level they must be

designed to resist uplift and/or horizontal water pressure. Applicant will be required to provide design and engineering calculations to support this requirement on the building permits.

- c. The proposed railing on the new deck is considered an outdoor fence and will be required to meet the following requirement: “No wall, fence or other outdoor obstruction shall be constructed in any floodplain district unless such structure is approved by the director of transportation and environmental services; provided that open mesh wire fences of not less than No. 9 wire, with mesh openings of not less than six inches times six inches, whose supports shall be securely anchored in concrete and whose wire shall be securely fastened to the supports, may be erected without any review by or approval of the director of transportation and environmental services under this section 6-300.”
- d. Any new mechanical, electrical and HVAC equipment be elevated above the 100-year water surface elevation.

C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria’s Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99).

C-3 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line.

C-4 Roof, surface and sub-surface drains be connected to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where storm sewer is not available applicant must provide a design to mitigate impact of stormwater drainage onto adjacent properties and to the satisfaction of the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services. (Sec.8-1-22)

C-5 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3)

C-7 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-3-61)

C-8 An erosion and sediment control plan must be approved by T&ES prior to any land disturbing activity greater than 2500 square feet. An erosion and sediment control bond shall be posted prior to release of the plan if required.

C-9 If construction results in land disturbing activity in excess of 2500 square feet, the applicant is required to comply with the provisions of Article XIII of the City’s Zoning Ordinance for stormwater quality control.