

Docket Item # 5 & 6  
BAR CASE #2011-0364 & 0365

BAR Meeting  
January 18, 2012

**ISSUE:** Partial Demolition/Encapsulation and Alterations

**APPLICANT:** 815 ½ King St LLC

**LOCATION:** 815 ½ King St

**ZONE:** KR / King Street urban retail

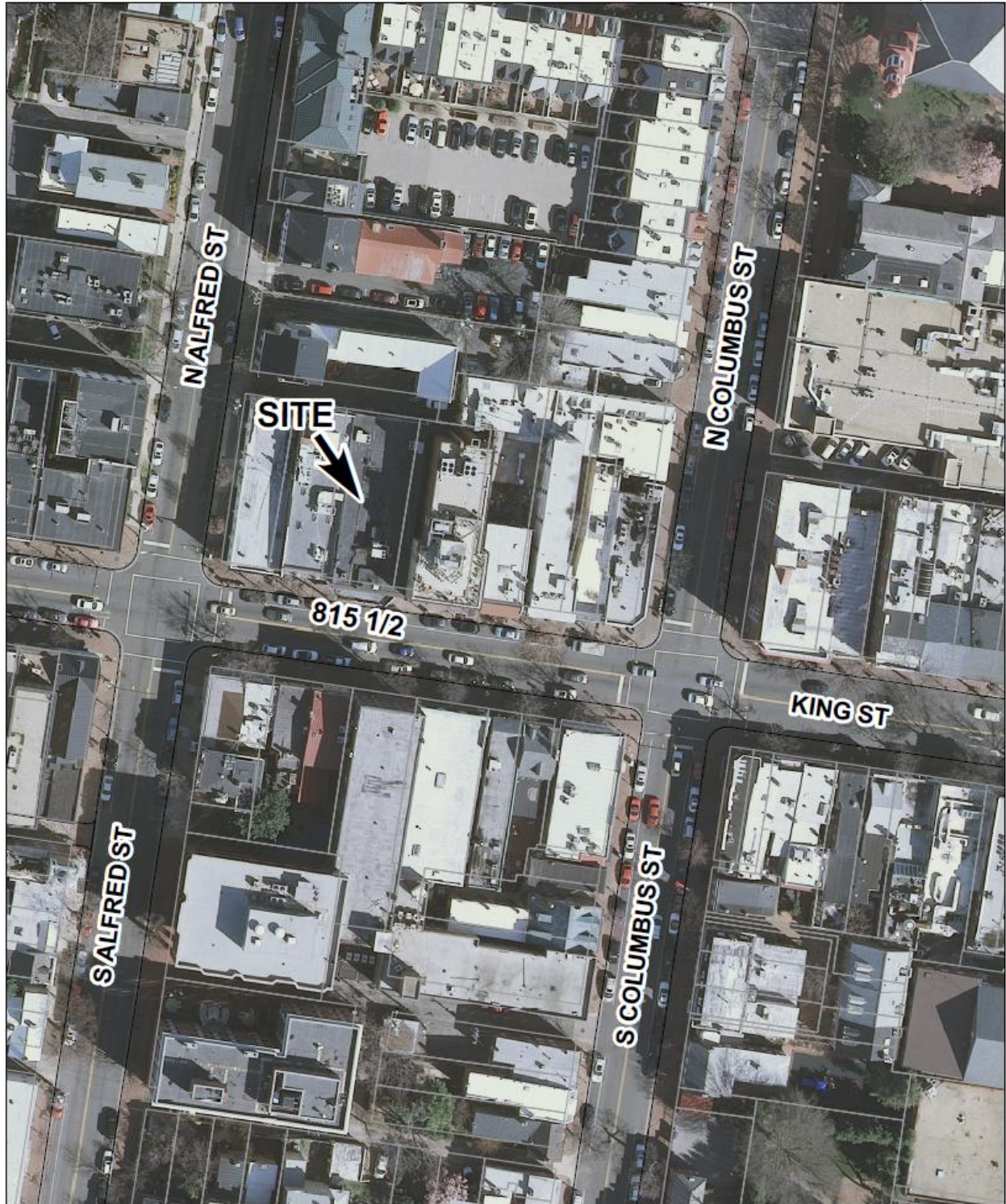
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the applicant coordinate demolition of the existing marquee and storefront system with Staff to determine if any original or historic building material remains and whether it can be salvaged and reused on site;
2. That Staff administratively approve the final location of doors within the proposed storefront framework;
3. That Staff approve the mortar and brick color and texture for any area requiring infill;
4. That Staff approve appropriate Beaux-Arts style light fixtures to match the two original lights on the front elevation;
5. That if replacement windows are necessary on the front or rear elevation, that they be in conformance with the Board's adopted Window Policy; and
6. That the applicant recreates the three finials and bracket molding at the roof parapet, shown in the original photographs, as part of the façade restoration.

**\*\*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.



**BAR CASE #2011-0364 &  
BAR CASE #2011-0365**



## **I. ISSUE**

The applicant is requesting approval of a Permit to Demolish/Encapsulate and a Certificate of Appropriateness for the following at 815 ½ King Street:

- Demolish existing marquee;
- Restore front (south) elevation in keeping with historic photograph;
- Remove existing front entrance and ticket booth and replace with modern aluminum storefront system; and
- Uncover bricked-in window openings on rear (north) elevation and expose existing windows.

## **II. HISTORY**

The Old Town Theater began as the Richmond Theater in **1914** and was the first permanent theater constructed in Alexandria.<sup>1</sup> The original Permit to Build, dated April 16, 1914, was for the purpose of "moving pictures, bowling alleys and billiards." The owners, Mr. Steele and Mr. Reed, hired a Mr. Atkinson as architect and R.G. Steele as contractor to construct the theater at a cost of \$7500. A circa 1929 photograph shows a metal marquee with illumination and a blade sign added at the second story. The owners reportedly operated a vaudeville theater on the first floor and a dance hall on the second floor until around 1932.<sup>2</sup> At that time, the theater closed for renovation, the dance hall was removed, and the balcony added. In 1980, the theater closed for renovations, the second screen was added, and the theater reopened as the Old Town Theater. The theater has a history of changes over the years that include renovations and reuse at times as a venue for both movies and live theater.

In 1956 the Board approved unspecified alterations (January 11, 1956). In 2001, the Board approved alterations for ADA compliant access to the theatre (BAR Case #s 2001-0101 and 0102, May 16, 2001). In 2007, the Board approved after-the-fact approval of a Permit to Demolish for the removal of a section of brick on the front façade and alterations to the underside of the marquee with conditions for repair (BAR Case #s 2007-0119 and 0120, July 18, 2007).

## **III. ANALYSIS**

The new owner for this building met with City Staff several times to describe studies he had commissioned to investigate maintaining the building's use as a theater. Unfortunately, the studies determined that continued operation as a theater was not financially feasible, primarily due to its small size. Therefore, the applicant has now indicated that he is looking for one or possibly two retail tenants for the space. However, the proposed alterations are all in keeping with the original exterior appearance of the theater. As the Board is aware, the proposed use of the building is not before the Board and, as there is no confirmed tenant at this point, no signage has been proposed. Signage that is beyond what can be approved administratively will return to the Board for approval in the future; or, alternately, if there are two tenants, a master sign plan must be approved by the Board.

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<sup>1</sup> History from [cinematreasures.org/theaters/77](http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/77)

<sup>2</sup> History Section [www.oldtowntheater.com](http://www.oldtowntheater.com)

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Staff supports the overall application, noting that the applicant has provided photographic documentation of the original building to support the proposed alterations. It is evident that much of the existing first story storefront has little, if any, historic material in its current form. For this particular building, there are at least two historically appropriate options for restoration. One option could include a reconstruction of the historic marquee, as shown in the 1929 photograph. The option selected by the applicant is a return to the original design of the facade, as constructed circa 1914.

#### Permit to Demolish

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 the opinion of Staff, none of the criteria for demolition and encapsulation are met and the Permit to Demolish should be granted. While a marquee is typical of historic theaters, Staff notes that, in this particular case, the applicant has provided a historic photograph showing the theater originally constructed without a marquee. A later historic photograph shows alterations that include a Beaux-Arts style metal marquee and a large illuminated blade sign, as well as a new storefront with a box office flanked by double doors. The existing Modern style marquee is clearly damaged and lacking in historic significance although it may have remnants of components (cable and steel structure) from the previous historic marquee installed possibly in 1929. Preliminary investigation by Staff indicates that none of the existing metal framing is from the 1929 period of construction but the chain support likely is.

Staff finds that the existing modern marquee is out of scale and detracts from the historic architectural style and original character defining features of this building. The existing storefront system with pairs of double doors and a box office, as well as the display areas with terrazzo tile, are a more recent alteration with no historic significance and therefore Staff has no objection to removal of the existing marquee or first-floor storefront but recommends that the

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applicant coordinate with Staff to determine whether any original or historic building material remains and whether it can be salvaged and reused on site.

It is evident that the original storefront metal cornice remains behind the marquee. As shown in the proposed alterations, this will be retained and repaired. This cornice is visually supported by the large restored brick piers on either side of the storefront and will become the dominant stylistic feature at the sidewalk level.

### Alterations

The applicant proposes to install a modern aluminum storefront system in place of the existing box office and entry. The new storefront will be in the same opening as the existing and historic opening so that the substantial brick piers on the sides will be uncovered and will remain. The historic first-story metal cornice will be retained and repaired. The applicant proposes to use a black anodized aluminum system with satin nickel hardware for the doors and windows. Staff finds this type of storefront to be appropriate for this building because, although it is clearly modern, it references the 1914 photograph and early metal storefronts common during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>-century. In addition, the character-defining cornice above the storefront will again be visually prominent. The modern storefront system also allows for a certain degree of flexibility with respect to the number and location of doors. The photo simulation shows three equal-sized openings that can be interchanged to allow for two sets of doors and one large window or one set of doors and two large windows. Because the tenant has not yet been determined, the applicant requests the flexibility to work with Staff to determine the final window and door arrangement within the framework of the proposed storefront system.

The applicant's photo simulation also shows a lighter color for the building's cornice and decorative tiles, which were likely a limestone colored cast stone. Currently these architectural details are painted a brown color that is close in color to the brick and are visually lost. Carefully removing the existing brown paint or painting them a lighter stone color will allow the theater to more closely resemble its appearance when first constructed and provide additional architectural interest.

The applicant proposes to remove the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century composite stone material on either side of the storefront to the original brick. If the original brick has been too damaged to restore, Staff will work with the applicant to select a suitable matching brick for these two locations. The return of these brick display areas are also a significant visual improvement and will provide potential signage areas for future tenants.

The postcard image of the original façade also shows three finials and bracket molding at the roof parapet. In light of the applicant's efforts to restore the building to its period of original construction, Staff recommends that these small but visually important details also be recreated.

The proposed lights shown in the photo simulation are an industrial, gooseneck form fixture that is not appropriate to the Beaux-Arts style of the original construction period. Staff recommends that a more appropriate Beaux-Arts style light fixture be used.

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Staff has no objection to reopening the windows on the rear elevation that have been covered with plywood and vents. Should there be no windows remaining beneath the plywood, all replacement windows must be in conformance with the Board's adopted Window Policy.

**STAFF**

Catherine Miliaras, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

#### **IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

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

##### Code Administration:

- F-1 The review by Code Administration is a preliminary review only. Once the applicant has filed for a building permit, code requirements will be based upon the building permit plans. If there are any questions, the applicant may contact Ken Granata, Acting Plan Review Supervisor at [ken.granata@alexandriava.gov](mailto:ken.granata@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-4193. (Code)
- C-1 Building and trades permits are required for this project. Five sets of *construction documents* sealed by a *Registered Design Professional* that fully detail the construction as well as layout and schematics of any mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems that may change(s)
- C-2 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-3 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-4 Any proposed future alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-5 The architect shall provide window manufacturer specification, size of openings for each window as well as lintel size for both doors and windows if the openings in the existing structure need to be enlarged.
- C-6 Building Code Analysis: The following minimum building code data is required on the drawings: a) use group, b) number of stories, c) construction type and d) floor area.
- C-7 All exterior walls and openings shall comply with the 2009 Edition of the Virginia Construction Code.
- C-8 Provide 5 sets of site plan upon submission for building permit.

##### Transportation & Environmental Services:

##### **FINDINGS:**

- F1. The alley located at the rear of the building is a Public Alley. It is advised that if any work is to be performed from the alley that the applicant contact T&ES, Construction & Inspection at (703) 746-4035 to discuss any permits and accommodation requirements that will be required. (T&ES)

- F2. It appears that the existing Encroachment Permit for the canopy (ENC2004-0009) is no longer required; if it is no longer required, please include this information with the SUP Application. (T&ES)

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition. (T&ES)
- R3. Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R4. All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (T&ES)
- R5. 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 all plans. (T&ES)

### CITY CODE REQUIREMENTS

- C-1 Any work within or performed from the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)
- C-2 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. (T&ES)
- C-3 All secondary utilities serving this site shall be placed underground. (Sec. 5-3-3) (T&ES)
- C-4 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). (T&ES)
- C5. Roof, surface and sub-surface drains shall be connect to the public storm sewer system, if available, by continuous underground pipe. Where a storm sewer is not available, the 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. (5-6-224) (T&ES)



**V. IMAGES**



**Figure 1. Existing front (south) elevation.**

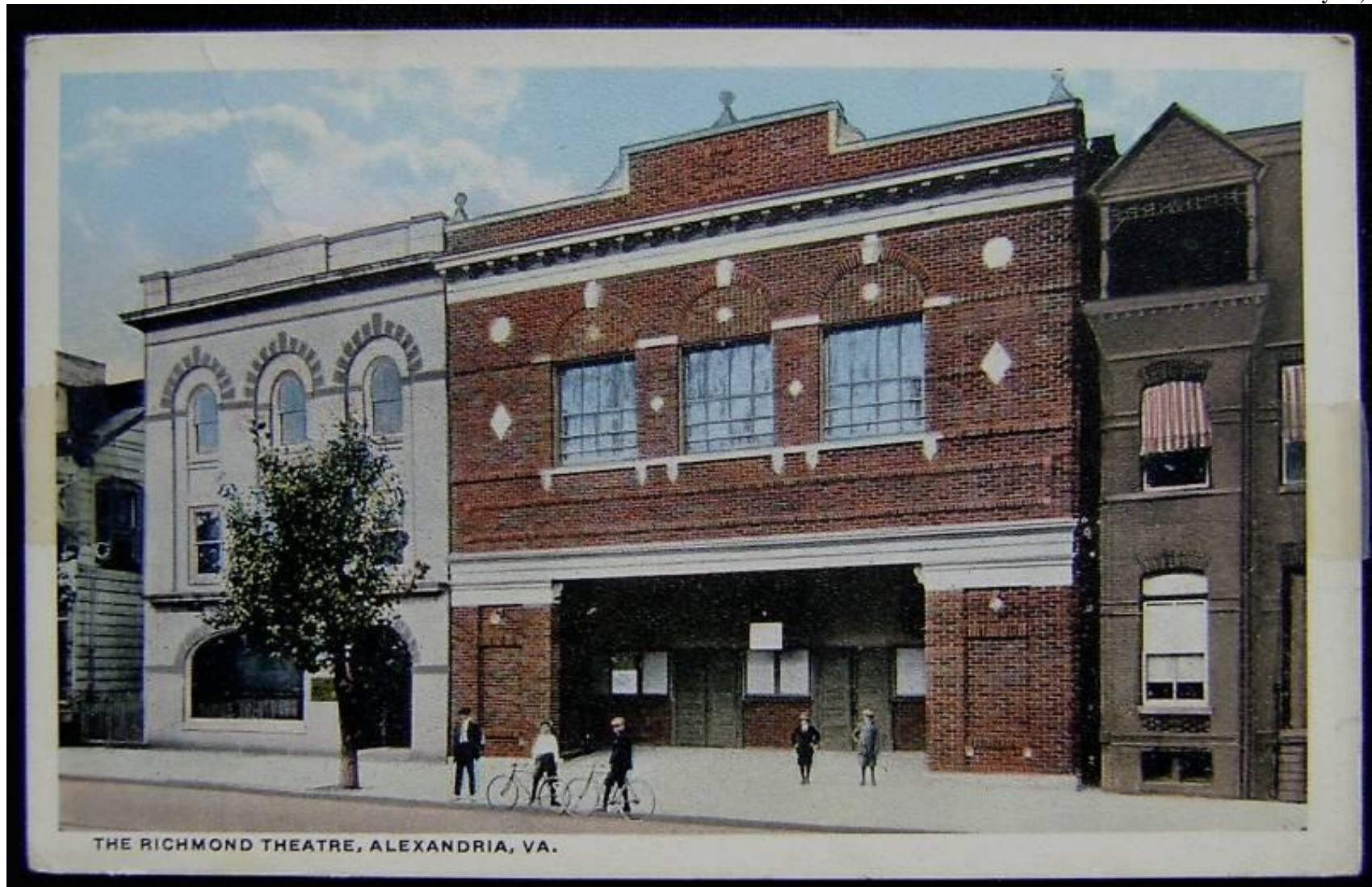


Figure 2. Historic photograph (circa 1915).



Figure 3. Historic photograph showing marquee and blade sign, circa 1929 (Courtesy Bob Collins).



PROPOSED FRONT FACADE RENOVATION

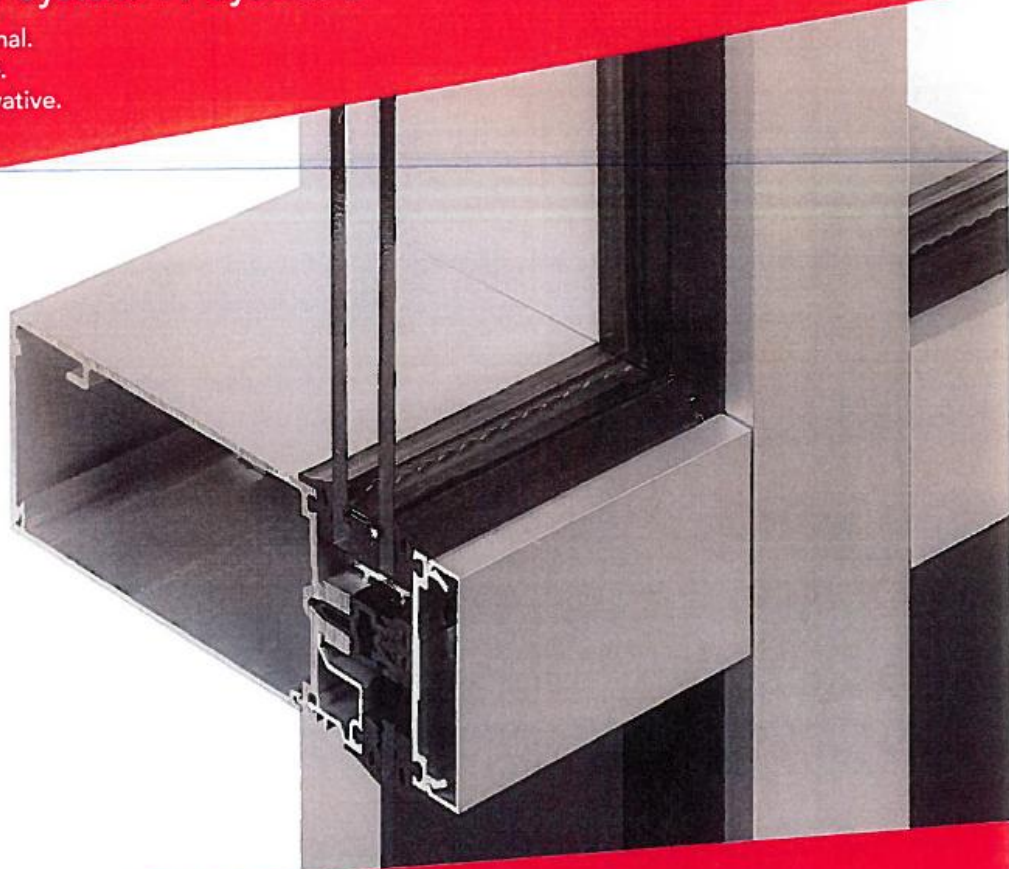
Figure 4. Proposed front (south) elevation alterations.



Figure 5. Existing rear (north) elevation.

## 1600UT (Ultra Thermal) Curtain Wall System™ 1600UT System™1 / System™2

Ultra thermal.  
Ultra value.  
Ultra innovative.



With increasing energy costs and stringent code requirements, building owners, architects and glaziers need high-performing products that can help them stay ahead of codes. Kawneer's 1600UT (Ultra Thermal) Curtain Wall System™ is an ultra innovative solution that raises the standards for pre-engineered performance. Built on the success of the flagship 1600 curtain wall platform, the 1600UT System™1 and 1600UT System™2 deliver high thermal performance, versatility, reliability and value. Both are stick fabricated, pressure glazed and ideal for low- to mid-rise commercial applications where high thermal performing façades are needed. 1600UT System™1 is an outside glazed, captured curtain wall system, while 1600UT System™2 is a Structural Silicone Glazed (SSG) curtain wall system. No matter the system, the end result is an ultra innovative, performance-driven, high-value curtain wall solution.

### Setting the Standard in Thermal Innovation

For the utmost in energy efficiency, Kawneer's 1600UT Curtain Wall System™ features an engineered polymer thermal separator and accommodates either double or triple insulating glass. Additionally, an optional fiberglass pressure plate can further enhance condensation resistance and thermal performance. 1600UT Curtain Wall System™ integrates seamlessly with other high thermal performing windows and doors from Kawneer to create a complete, advanced, thermally efficient solution for commercial buildings. The system is tested in accordance with North American performance standards, including seismic, thermal cycling and dynamic water.



Figure 6. Specifications for storefront system.