

Docket Item #5  
BAR CASE #2004-0035

BAR Meeting  
March 24, 2004

**ISSUE:** Signs, after the fact  
**APPLICANT:** Paul Coles  
**LOCATION:** 522 North Patrick Street  
**ZONE:** CSL/Commercial

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**\*\*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 issuance 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 the Code Enforcement Bureau (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Enforcement, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-838-4360 for further information.

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following conditions:

1. That the window signs are omitted; and,
2. That a sign permit is obtained from Code Enforcement.

### DISCUSSION:

#### Applicant's Description of Undertaking:

"Install signs at 522 N. Patrick for Allstate Insurance 24" x 36" & 3 window signs not to exceed 20% of windows."

#### Issue:

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for four signs for an Allstate Insurance agency located at 522 North Patrick Street. At the end of 2003, the applicant installed four signs without seeking the approval of the Board of Architectural Review. The applicant was twice notified of the need to apply for a certificate of appropriateness. The letters included citations for the zoning violation with fees totaling \$150.00. Subsequently, the applicant made application and, at the request of Staff, removed the two window signs. These signs exceeded the 20% coverage allowed for window signs under the zoning ordinance. Staff notes that the applicant has not obtained the sign permit required by Code Enforcement for the hanging sign.

The applicant is now seeking approval for the existing hanging sign and the existing door sign and for two new, smaller window signs. The double sided hanging sign is 2' high by 3' wide, or 6 square feet in area. White with blue lettering, it reads: "Allstate, 'You're in good hands', auto, life, homeowners, renters, long term care". At the center of the sign is the Allstate logo consisting of two hands. The sign is mounted 8' above the sidewalk on a scroll bracket made of black metal. The door sign consists of white lettering with the same text as the hanging sign except that instead of listing services, it gives the hours of business. Staff estimates that the sign is approximately 3.5 square feet and the total size of the glass doorway 26.38 square feet. The two window signs will also consist of white lettering reading: "Allstate, 'You're in good hands,'" with the logo. Each window sign will be located at the top of the center panel of the 37.3 square foot window and will be 6 square feet in size. The total signage proposed is approximately 21.5 square feet. The frontage occupied by the Allstate Insurance agency is 35 linear feet.

There is an existing window sign reading "Bobby B. Stafford Attorney at Law" on the second story above the Allstate frontage. The dimensions of that sign are not known, but Staff estimates that it is approximately 7 square feet.

#### History and Analysis:

The two story brick clad cinderblock office building at 522 & 524 North Patrick Street was constructed circa 1957 according to plans prepared by R.C. Archer, Jr (Permit #6743, 9/11/1957). The permit lists James H. Raby as both the owner and builder. Raby, an attorney, also owned the adjacent stucco clad "Raby Building" at 1000 Pendleton Street at the corner of Patrick and Pendleton. The new brick building at 522 & 524 North Patrick with its clean lines

and metal windows was strikingly modern for the area and suggests the influence of the International Style.

In 1988, the Board approved a hanging sign at 524 North Patrick Street (1/13/1988). This sign no longer exists. Staff could not locate any record of approval for the window sign on the second floor. It is possible that the sign predates the establishment of the Board of Architectural Review in 1986. In 2002, the Board approved the existing signs for the hair salon and barber shop in the Raby Building at (BAR Case #2002-0098, 5/22/2002).

The proposed signage complies with the zoning ordinance requirements. The total signage proposed is less than the one square foot for every linear foot of building frontage allowed under Section 9-202(B)(1) of the ordinance. If the existing second story window sign is included, the total amount of signage still conforms to the ordinance. In addition, each door or window sign occupies less than 20% of the total window area as required under Section 9-202(B)(3) of the zoning ordinance.

Staff believes the proposed signs are compatible in their appearance with the mid-20th century building on which they are located. However, Staff is concerned by the amount of signage proposed and believes it to be incompatible with the historic district. The *Design Guidelines* state that “generally only one sign per business is appropriate.” (Signs-Page 3) Although the building is located on Patrick Street, a commercial corridor, the 500 block of North Patrick Street block is mainly residential. The other commercial establishment in the area, the hair salon and barber shop at the corner of Patrick and Pendleton streets also has multiple signs, including three window or door signs and one hanging sign, but these face two different streets and serve to distinguish between the hair salon and barber shop space. Moreover, the signage for the barber shop/hair salon is relatively discrete in size and appearance. Staff believes the proposed signage for the Allstate Insurance agency will be too obtrusive, concentrating a great deal of signage in a relatively small area. The resulting appearance will be overly busy. Thus, Staff recommends that the hanging sign and door sign be approved but that the two window signs be denied.

## CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

### Code Enforcement:

C-1 Projecting, hanging signs must comply with USBC [H103-H107, H112] for type of materials, maximum projection, vertical clearance below all parts of the sign, and additional loads.

C-2 A construction permit is required for the proposed project.

### Historic Alexandria:

“Signs shown on photos of windows (existing) are not appropriate. The question is whether any window signage is appropriate. Right now it is excessive. I would prefer to see no window signage.”