

Docket Item #13
BAR Case #2003-0200

BAR Meeting
September 17, 2003

ISSUE: Sign
APPLICANT: Solar Planet
LOCATION: 901 N Washington Street
ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy.

DISCUSSION:

Applicant s Description of the Undertaking:

Install one 4' x 6' internally illuminated double face cabinet sign to replace illuminated double face Time & Temp sign.

Issue:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a sign for Solar Planet Tanning at 901 North Washington Street. The double faced hanging sign measures 4' by 6' and will replace the existing time/temperature sign on the southwest corner of the building. The internally illuminated sign has vinyl faces with an aluminum frame. The proposed sign includes purple and red lettering with a yellow and red sun logo.

History and Analysis:

The seven story curtain wall building at 901 North Washington Street was constructed in 1964, according to tax records, in a developer modern idiom. Although it is a fine example of that somewhat questionable style, the building is not architecturally compatible with the George Washington Memorial Parkway or the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

In 1993, the Board approved the installation of a 10' diameter satellite dish on the south side of the mechanical penthouse on the roof at 901 North Washington Street (BAR Case #93-50, 4/21/93).

The Board is particularly concerned with the maintenance of the George Washington Memorial Parkway. Therefore, signs on Washington Street must be compatible with the memorial nature of the parkway. In addition, signs on Washington Street must comply with the Washington Street Standards in the zoning ordinance.

The Washington Street Standards requires that signs and other building features reflect in texture, tone and color, the historic setting in the district. While the building at 901 North Washington is not a historic building, it and its modern neighbors act as background along Washington Street against which the historic buildings stand out.

The proposed sign does not comply with the Washington Street Standards or the recommendations of the *Design Guidelines*. Staff believes that the overly large illuminated sign does not contribute to the background nature of modern buildings along Washington Street and thus do not contribute to the memorial character of the Parkway. Additionally, the *Design Guidelines* state that internally illuminated signs are discouraged (Signs - Page 5).

Further it is the opinion of Staff that the proposed sign does not meet the The Memory Test for building on the George Washington Memorial Parkway that was adopted by the Board in April 1999 in its policy set forth in *Working Toward a Definition of the Memorial Character of the*

George Washington Memorial Parkway in the City of Alexandria, Virginia. That policy states:
The principal overriding design objective for new construction on Washington Street is to create buildings which are not overt visual intrusions into the established cityscape. Such buildings must be predominately background buildings that do not seek to make a strong impact on the Washington Street vista. Put another way, it is the goal that buildings fronting the Parkway in Alexandria are not visually jarring in scale, massing or materials or color. An organizing idea is that by the time one traverses the Parkway and enters Mount Vernon, the principal memory of buildings in Alexandria will be of the surviving historic buildings associated with Washington.

Therefore, Staff recommends deferral of the application for restudy.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement

C-1 Projecting, hanging signs must comply with USBC 2911.0 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

This just does not seem appropriate at the entrance to the City & on GW Memorial Parkway.