

Docket Item #6
BAR CASE# 2004-0136

BAR Meeting
July 21, 2004

ISSUE: Signs

APPLICANT: Sumpter Priddy III, Inc.

LOCATION: 323 South Washington Street

ZONE: CD/Commercial

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application for two wall signs, to be located on the rear wall facing the alley and above the entrance on the south side facing Washington Street.

I. ISSUE:

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for two signs to be located on the three story, semi-detached brick building at 323 South Washington Street. The applicant, Sumpter Priddy III, Inc, an antique and art gallery, is moving from 601 South Washington Street to 323 South Washington Street, formerly the location of Video Vault. The proposed signs are wood wall signs with a burgundy background and gold leaf lettering and borders. The applicant is requesting a small sign on the entablature above the entry vestibule on the south side of the building. The sign will face Washington Street and will serve to identify the entrance to the store, as the building no longer has a door on the front face of the building. This sign is proposed to be 3' by 8" and will read "Sumpter Priddy III, Inc." In addition, the applicant is requesting that a 6' by 10.5" sign reading "Sumpter Priddy, III, Inc." be located above the back door on the rear (west) side of the building. This sign will face the parking area for the store.

The applicant had originally proposed a third sign to be located on the south side of the building in the space between the second and third story windows near the front of the building. This wall sign was to be 10' by 10.5" and read, "Sumpter Priddy III, Inc. Antiques Art." This sign would not comply with Section 9-202(B)(1) of the zoning ordinance, which requires that all signs be located on a wall which faces a street, alley or parking area and therefore has been removed from the application. The applicant has indicated that in the future they may seek approval for a hanging sign to be located at the front of the building.

II. HISTORY:

Based on information in Alexandria: Street by Street, 323 South Washington Street was constructed as a pair with 321 South Washington Street between 1853 and 1859 by Robert H. Miller, who owned a large china and glassware store on King Street (Page 183). Between 1960 and 1976 the front of the buildings at 323 and 321 South Washington Street on the street level was altered to eliminate the front entrance at 323 South Washington Street and to insert bay windows. BAR records mention approval of a bay window at 321 South Washington Street on March 31, 1968. This may be the date of the street level makeover at both 321 and 323 South Washington Street.

In 1993, the Board approved a hanging sign on a scroll bracket for Video Vault at 323 South Washington Street (BAR Case #93-126). In 1996 the Board approved signage for Sumpter Priddy III, Inc. in its previous location at 601 South Washington Street. At that time, the Board approved three flat signs and a hanging sign for the building, which has storefronts on both Washington and Gibbon Streets (BAR Case #96-130, 6/19/1996).

III. ANALYSIS:

The proposed wall signs comply with zoning ordinance requirements. According to the applicant, the building width facing South Washington Street and facing the rear parking lot is approximately 18 feet. Section 9-202(B)(1) of the zoning ordinance states that all signs

displayed below 20 feet height on any building wall which faces a street, alley or parking area shall not exceed 1 square foot for each foot of building width facing such street, alley or parking area. Thus, the maximum sign area allowed on the front and rear of the building is 18 square feet for each face. The proposed signs are well below the maximum area allowed. The sign facing the front is 1.98 square feet and that facing the rear is 5.25 square feet. As noted above, the sign proposed for the south side of the building is not allowed as that wall does not face a street, alley or parking area.

The two proposed flat wall signs are modest in size and appropriate to the period of the building. The submitted materials show two possible locations for the sign over the entrance on the south side of the building. Staff believes the higher and slightly larger sign is appropriate. While it will cover a molding strip in the entablature, its placement is more pleasing and more effective than the lower and smaller alternative.

The lack of an entrance on Washington Street presents the commercial tenant of 323 South Washington Street with a difficulty. The proposed sign above the south side entrance identifies the entrance but is well removed from the front of the building. Therefore, Staff would not be opposed if in the future the applicant requested approval of a third sign to be located at the front of the building. Staff notes that a hanging sign was previously approved at the southern corner on the front of the building. This location provides a presence on Washington Street and highlights the passage to the entrance on the south side of the building. Any additional signage will require BAR approval.

IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of the application for two wall signs, to be located on the rear wall facing the alley and above the entrance on the south side facing Washington Street.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

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

Code Enforcement:

C-1 Wall signs must comply with USBC [H103-H111].

C-2 Construction permits are required for the proposed project.

Office of Historic Alexandria:

“No comment.”